

THE SOCIO-INTELLECTUAL  
FOUNDATIONS OF MALEK  
BENNABI'S APPROACH TO  
CIVILIZATION



BADRANE BENLAHCENE

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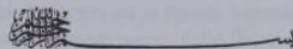
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\* (SWT) – *Subhānahu wa Ta'ālā*: May He be praised and may His transcendence be affirmed. Said when referring to God.

Last but not least, my heartiest thanks, gratefulness and deep heart-felt expressions of gratitude to the Malaysian people and government for giving me this chance to live among them and to learn some of my enduring lessons from their cultural traditions and heritage.

BADRANE BENLAHCENE

## FOREWORD



Of knowledge, we have none, save what  
You have taught us. (The Qur'an 2:32)

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT (IIIT) has great pleasure in presenting *The Socio-Intellectual Foundations of Malek Bennabi's Approach to Civilization*, originally written and submitted as a PhD thesis by Dr. Badrane Benlahcene.

The center of attention is the work of Malek Bennabi (1905-1973), a prominent Algerian thinker and great Muslim intellectual, intently focused on unravelling the causes of Muslim decline and the success of Western civilization and culture. Bennabi's extensive research led him to the conclusion that the key problem lay not in the Qur'an or Islamic faith but in Muslims themselves, and if a true picture of the effects of colonization as well as factors governing civilization and its movement were to be thoroughly grasped, then the seemingly entrenched problems of the Muslim world could be solved and a new era of Muslim renaissance ushered in.

The author investigates Bennabi's approach to civilization and the principles drawn using metatheorizing methodology (*Mu*) going beyond available literature to present not only Bennabi's interdisciplinary approach to civilization, but also to analyze in-depth its underlying structure. In doing so he sheds further light on perhaps one of the more intriguing elements of Bennabi's theory, that civilization is governed by internal-external and social-intellectual factors and that an equation can be generated for civilization itself.

This equation of Man+Soil+Time = Civilization and of which religion, according to Bennabi, forms the all-important catalyst, is

explained and studied in careful detail and its significance in terms of the reversal of Muslim decline evaluated. What is clearly apparent is that for Bennabi Man is the central force in any civilizing process and without him the other two elements are of no value.

With regard to outcomes, Bennabi's unerring conviction that unless Muslims changed their spiritual condition they could not effect any far-reaching, meaningful change in society is echoed in the Qur'anic verse: "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (13:11). Bennabi acknowledged that this was the way that leads to civilization.

This study brings new insight to the methodology and philosophy of Bennabi's thought. We hope that the analysis and ideas contained therein, will not only make an important contribution to the subject of civilization, but also generate greater awareness and interest among readers for Bennabi's life and work as a whole.

Where dates are cited according to the Islamic calendar (hijrah) they are labelled AH. Otherwise they follow the Gregorian calendar and labelled CE where necessary. Arabic words are italicized except for those which have entered common usage. Diacritical marks have been added only to those Arabic names not considered contemporary. Where quotes have been cited from foreign-language sources, the translation into English has been that of the author.

The IIIT, established in 1981, has served as a major center to facilitate serious scholarly efforts based on Islamic vision, values and principles. The Institute's programs of research, seminars and conferences during the last thirty years have resulted in the publication of more than four hundred titles in English and Arabic, many of which have been translated into several other languages.

We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to the author, who throughout the various stages of the production process cooperated closely with the IIIT London Office's editorial team. We also wish to thank Emilia Garofalo for the quality of her editorial work and close attention to detail. Her recommendations and suggestions were invaluable to the final production.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of Samuel Huntington's now famous article "The Clash of Civilizations"<sup>1</sup> the concern about civilization has been reintroduced into the debate on the world order in intellectual circles. It has enhanced the previous efforts of philosophers of history and social scientists to establish civilization studies as a distinctive field of research. It paid attention to the importance of the study of civilizations and their importance for an understanding of global change. Furthermore, the end of the so-called Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union brought to the debate the issue of civilization studies and related questions even though the very category of "civilization" and "civilizations" had been avoided by most intellectual and political circles until recently. In this context, many researchers and scholars called for the review and re-examination of the works of those leading civilizationists<sup>2</sup> among the historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers who explored, at length, issues such as the causes, emergence, rise, interactions, achievements, decline, and fall of civilizations. The list of those leading civilizationists includes among others, Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406), Comte (1798-1857), Spengler (1880-1936), Weber (1864-1920), Durkheim (1858-1917), Toynbee (1889-1975), Sorokin (1889-1968), Kroeber (1876-1960), Braudel (1902-1985), etc.<sup>3</sup> In the Muslim world, since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there were efforts to view history from a civilizational perspective. Among the thinkers and leaders of those efforts, Malek Bennabi (1905-1973) a scholar of profound ideas, and leading Muslim Algerian intellectual, is the civilizationist. Some of those who are interested in his thought consider him a writer, thinker, and probably the first social philosopher and social scientist the Muslim world has seen



since the time of Ibn Khaldūn.<sup>4</sup> Others consider him a "philosopher-visionary for the entire Ummah" whose concern about the decadence of the Muslim civilization led him to analyze the causes of the decay and to provide solutions.

Bennabi was also one of the few original thinkers who have succeeded in making remarkably systematic contributions. He set out to search for universal laws and fundamental principles that govern human societies and civilizations, and determine their destiny in history.

From the 1940's until his death in 1973 he wrote numerous books and articles providing penetrating insights into the philosophy of history, sociology, social and historical change and pressing cultural and civilizational issues, as well as different cultural traditions that have engaged prominent thinkers of all ages.

However, the central theme of Bennabi's thought was the study of civilization in general, and the attempt to provide solutions to the state of Muslim civilization in particular. In other words, Muslim civilization was the starting point for Bennabi to study civilization and to theorize about this issue.

Since his early years, Bennabi was drawn to the stagnation in which Muslims dwelled. Therefore, he was involved in many intellectual and activist movements, in efforts to reactivate the civilizing process in the Muslim world. However, the many attempts made in various quarters seemed fruitless to Bennabi because of the lack of clear vision and a methodology to approach the matter.

As asserted by many, Bennabi directed his efforts to reactivate the dynamism of the Muslim civilization by developing his approach to the study of civilization in general and Muslim civilization, in particular. While many activists and intellectuals tended to resolve the present dilemma of backwardness of the Muslim world in terms of economics, politics or ideology, he emphasized the role of ideas as the catalyst behind the growth of civilization. Civilization, Bennabi maintains, is not an accumulation, rather, a construction and an architecture.<sup>5</sup>

Drawing upon a deep understanding of Islam, a sound assimilation and insight of the social sciences, and a proper grasp of the dynamics of human society and history, Bennabi adopted an etiological approach

that allowed him to gain considerable knowledge into the performance of human societies and the workings and dynamics of culture and civilization as seen from a universal perspective.<sup>6</sup>

He directed all his efforts to resolve societal problems within the framework of civilization. In other words, he considered civilization as the intelligible unit with which to study socio-historical phenomena. In this regard, he viewed civilization as the core of any study of human conditions in their short term or long term scale. He said:

The problem of every people, in its essence, is that of its civilization. And it is not possible for any people to comprehend and resolve its problem, if it does not elevate its thought and capacities to the level of the great human affairs and speculate deeply in order to understand the factors which construct and deconstruct the civilizations.<sup>7</sup>

Any reader who becomes acquainted with Bennabi's treatise on civilization will find that the ideas and the vocabulary of his thought are a mixture of and a result of the examination of the works of many leading thinkers and may not be totally new if viewed from a partial perspective. This does not mean, however, that his ideas are drawn from existing sources and put side by side as heterogeneous elements. Bennabi's thought is, indeed, an organized totality, or a system into which all concepts, terms and ideas, whatever their origin, have been integrated with an entirely systematic interpretation.

Compared to other thinkers and civilizationists, Bennabi's approach to civilization still needs to be deeply analyzed and understood. It is still not fully uncovered and implemented. He has especially developed his approach to civilization to present a diagnosis of the phenomena that dominate the contemporary Muslim world, a phenomena of backwardness, explaining their origins, and how to overcome them.<sup>8</sup> The latter suggests that Bennabi's approach to the different issues related to the study of civilization and its course in history has great importance in the intellectual milieu for the diagnosis of the Muslim civilizational crisis.

As mentioned previously, although Bennabi's work has been available in French and Arabic since the late 1950s, his ideas or

methodological approach to the study of the various problems of the Muslim civilization seldom received serious scholarly attention before the 1980s.<sup>9</sup> Rather, in many instances he was misunderstood and even sometimes misrepresented by different and conflicting ideological quarters.<sup>10</sup>

Despite these later acknowledgments of the importance of the aspects mentioned of Bennabi's thought and ideas, it has been those aspects of Bennabi's work which do not reflect the depth of his thought that have caught the attention of his readers. Accordingly, issues of culture, civilization, the cyclical conception of historical development and social change, and the relevance of all these to the present and immediate preoccupations of Muslims have been at the centre of attention for most of the writings about him. However, little heed, if any, has been given to the fundamental theoretical and methodological framework underlying Bennabi's treatment of such issues.

In other words, little and superficial consideration has been given to the roots of his approach to civilization and to the sources from which Bennabi developed his concepts, terms, and approach. To the author's knowledge to date, there has been no such serious attempt to uncover the underlying structure of Bennabi's thought in order to understand the originality, the credibility and the authenticity of his ideas in tackling the malaise of Muslim civilization.

In the same context, Mesawi (1991) and Hassan (1991) asserted that the significance of Bennabi's thought derives from his scientific training combined with a historical, sociological, and philosophical outlook which enabled him to fathom the depths of European civilization and gain a deep understanding of its culture, as well as from his original thinking and analysis of the Ummah's strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, Hassan asserted that Bennabi's scope ranged across social, political, economic, moral and theological speculations.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the primary concern of this study is to determine the different factors that influenced the formulation and development of Malek Bennabi's approach to civilization, specifically, events and circumstances of his era that motivated this thinker who lived in a critical period of the contemporary Muslim world.

This study is also concerned with the tools, methods, concepts, and theories used by, Bennabi. Furthermore, it is concerned with the analysis of the process through which Bennabi formulated and developed his approach.

#### AIMS AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study presents an in-depth understanding of the theoretical framework of Bennabi's approach to civilization, and how it affected his theorization of civilization and its course in history. The study also seeks to examine Bennabi's interpretation of the movement of civilization throughout its course in history and the civilizing process. Moreover, it aims to understand contemporary civilization and its consequences on social life, and provides a civilizational framework for decision-makers, so that they can better solve the problems within their respective civilizational framework.

Although there are many studies on the issue of civilization, and a growing number on the historical thinking of Bennabi, the importance of the present work rests upon Bennabi's metatheoretical approach because of the following points:

1. It reflects the various intellectual efforts in the Muslim world, since early 19<sup>th</sup> century, to formulate a comprehensive approach to resolve the dilemma of backwardness, and to bring back and activate Muslim civilization.
2. It focuses on the development of civilization using an interdisciplinary approach that draws from contributions in the disciplines of philosophy of history and the social sciences, and makes a connection with Ibn Khaldūn's heritage.
3. It reflects an uncommon perspective and is therefore essential in diagnosing the different partial dilemmas in the Muslim world as well as in other world civilizations.
4. It analyzes and elaborates some of Bennabi's concepts which are still need to be elaborated, analyzed and understood as an integrated system including, for instance, the concept of civilization, the role and status of humans in history, religion as a catalyst of



civilizational values, the three realms, the three stages, the social relationship web, the idea of orientation, etc.

5. It examines Bennabi's background to find out how he was influenced in developing his approach. On the one hand he had an Islamic background, studied Islamic traditional sciences and adopted Ibn Khaldūn's heritage. On the other hand, he enriched his knowledge of western cultural and scientific tradition, during his thirty year stay in France where he studied philosophy and the social and natural sciences.

The points presented above give a *raison d'être* for the present study, and suggest an adequate methodology to undertake the research on Bennabi's approach and its roots.

#### SOME NOTES ON METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

There are many approaches that could be applied to research of this nature, that is, to undertake a study that focuses on the socio-intellectual foundations and uncovers the underlying structure of Bennabi's approach to civilization, in addition to the various factors that contributed to its formulation and development. Methodologically speaking, to undertake this study I chose the metatheorizing approach because it incorporates the elements of both the sociology of knowledge and the history of ideas, as will be seen in the following pages.

In this context, I adopt Ritzer's metatheorizing approach – with some adaptations – because of its applicability and usefulness, as well as its distinctiveness which will be demonstrated in the following sections. It provides the theoretical analysis that defines a research problem, and determines how that problem should be tackled.<sup>12</sup>

To allow a better appreciation of Bennabi's concept of civilization, Ritzer's metatheorizing adapts more systematically to the Islamic intellectual and cultural framework which constituted the fundamental sphere in which Bennabi's ideas grew and took their final shape.

A full explanation of this method and its techniques seems to be of great importance. Thus, we are going to discuss the following elements:

#### (1) Ritzer's Metatheorizing Approach

In recent years there has been an interest in the use of the metatheorizing approach in sociology as well as other related fields of research.<sup>13</sup> In order to legitimate its use in the present study, it is important to give an appropriate explanation of this approach. The author seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What is metatheorizing? (2) Why is it becoming increasingly important? (3) How is it being used in sociology? How will it be implemented in the present study which belongs to philosophy of history on the one hand, and to sociology on the other?

##### (a) What is Metatheorizing?

The prefix "meta" has now appeared in many disciplines in the social sciences. In general, it is used to mean "after", "about", and "beyond". As the theoretical sociologist Zhao stated, metatheorizing is a way of practicing meta-study in addition to meta-method and meta-data-analysis.<sup>14</sup> Meta-study refers to studies that involve studies about (or of) other studies. It is occasionally referred to as a second-order study. For instance, while the first-order one analyzes a given phenomenon X, a second-order study analyzes the study of X. Meta-study transcends or goes beyond previous studies.<sup>15</sup>

Metatheorizing is the combination of two words; meta and theorizing. Meta means going beyond or higher, transcending: it is used to form terms designating an area of study whose purpose is to examine the nature, assumptions, structure, etc. of a specified field (metaphysics, metacriticism) while theorizing means to form a theory or theories,<sup>16</sup> or the process of making a theory. Thus, metatheorizing may be defined as going beyond the process of making a theory, to look beyond the theory, to analyze the roots that make the grounds of such a theory. Furthermore, it is to go beyond the theory to examine the nature, assumptions, structure, and surroundings of such a theory or theories.

Metatheorizing is the systematic study of the underlying structure of sociological theory.<sup>17</sup> It is a way of doing a meta-study and a kind of meta-analysis of the structure of theories and the theorists. In other words, it is a theoretical endeavor to uncover the various factors

behind the emergence, shape, development, and use of such a theory. In addition, it is a metatheoretical viewpoint that theoretically deals with the different factors that have contributed to the form of the theory and the theorist.<sup>18</sup>

Since the 1980s, George Ritzer has asserted that metatheorizing is the systematic study of the underlying structure of sociological theory.<sup>19</sup> To make this model adaptable to other disciplines he mentions that sociologists are not the only scientists to do meta-analysis, that is, to reflexively study their own discipline, but philosophers, psychologists, political scientists, a number of other social scientists, and historians as well.

Beside the fact that metatheorists and meta-analysis are found in other fields, what distinguishes other kinds of such analyses from the metatheorizing model are the end products rather than the process of metatheorizing, which all metatheorists share.

In his model, Ritzer states three varieties of metatheorizing, largely defined by differences in the end products.<sup>20</sup> The first type, Metatheorizing as a means of attaining a deeper understanding of theory (*Mu*), involves the study of theory in order to produce a better, more profound understanding of extant theory. *Mu* is concerned, more specifically, with the study of theories, theorists, and communities of theorists. The second type, Metatheorizing as a prelude to theory development (*Mp*), entails the study of extant theory in order to produce new sociological theory. There is also a third type, Metatheorizing as a source of perspectives that overarch sociological theory (*Mo*), in which the study of theory is oriented toward the goal of producing a perspective, one could say a metatheory, that overarches some part or all sociological theory.

*(b) Metatheorizing as a means of understanding Mu*

The author is concerned with and will analyze the first type of metatheorizing, (*Mu*), which is in line with the aim of the present study.

*Mu* involves the study of theory in order to produce a better, more profound understanding of extant theory, and, more specifically, with the study of theories, theorists, and communities of theorists. According to Ritzer, *Mu* is composed of four basic dimensions (subtypes), all

of which involve the formal or informal study of theory to attain a deeper understanding of it.

THE FIRST DIMENSION (*internal-social*) looks within the field of study, and focuses on social rather than cognitive factors. The main approach here emphasizes the communal aspects of various theories and includes efforts to identify the major schools in the history of the field of study. It also emphasizes the studies of the theorists themselves that examine their institutional affiliations, their career patterns, their positions within the field of research, and so on.<sup>21</sup> It includes the efforts to identify the major schools in the history of the field of study. In this metatheoretical dimension, the focus is upon the backgrounds of the theorists themselves, that is, the family background and connections, religious ties, intellectual connections with major thinkers, and personal experiences.<sup>22</sup> In Bennabi's case, the focus is upon Bennabi's various personal experiences and interests, his background (family, religious, and educational background), and his intellectual pursuits (activist and intellectual life).

THE SECOND DIMENSION (*external-social*) shifts to a more macro level to look at the larger society (national and socio-cultural settings, etc.) and the nature of its impact on theorizing. In other words, the external social dimension emphasizes the relationships between the theorization process and the various institutions, the structures of society, and other social activities which have direct or indirect relationship with the development of the approach or theory.<sup>23</sup> In Bennabi's case, this dimension will focus upon the relationship between the external social factors and the formulation and development of Bennabi's approach. It at giving more sociological insights to understand the larger socio historical context that directed Bennabi to study civilization and formulate his approach.

Therefore, the main focus of this dimension is on the two processes of colonization and decolonization that formed the larger historical and social context of Bennabi's thought. It enables us to examine the relationship between the two processes and Bennabi's efforts to formulate an approach to the issue of the civilizational backwardness in the Muslim world, and the persistent decline and stagnation of its civilization.



THE THIRD DIMENSION (*internal-intellectual*) focuses on intellectual or cognitive issues that are traditionally internal to the field of study (civilization).<sup>24</sup> It includes attempts to identify the major cognitive paradigms, the schools of thought, the changes in paradigms, and the development of the general metatheoretical tools with which to analyze the existing theories and to develop new theories.<sup>25</sup> In Bennabi's case, the internal-intellectual factors that have an impact upon his theorization are the cognitive (intellectual) ones related to the study of civilization.

It also explores how scholars who had similar concerns approached the same issue, what the main features of their approaches were, as well as their influence on Bennabi's theorization on the issue of civilization. In other words, it focuses on the formation of the intellectual aspect of his personality, on the paradigms of thought, schools, and approaches to the same issues that concerned Bennabi.

THE FOURTH DIMENSION (*external-intellectual*) turns to other academic disciplines for ideas, tools, concepts, and theories that can be used in the study of civilization.<sup>26</sup> In Bennabi's case, this dimension involves the impact of the Qur'an,<sup>27</sup> religious thought in the Muslim World, philosophy, psychology, the natural sciences, and other intellectual activities external to the field of civilization studies and its two dominant paradigms.

These four dimensions help us to focus on what this methodology provides for researchers on theories and theoretical backgrounds.

*Mu* provides systematic methods of understanding, evaluating, criticizing, and improving existing theories. It is the distinctive responsibility of metatheorizing to deepen the level of understanding of theories. Metatheorists systematically study detailed (often comparative) arrays of sociological theories, and have at their disposal an arsenal of tools that allows them to uncover many things that would not be visible to a more casual student of theory.

Furthermore, *Mu* enables a more adequate evaluation and critical analysis of extant theories. When we talk about first-order and second-order inquiry, what distinguishes the two types of research is their relationship with the social world. While the first-order research shows that the primary study deals directly with the social world, the second-order research (metatheory) deals with the primary study.

### (c) Why is Metatheorizing important?

Ritzer states that metatheorizing is relevant to theorizing as follows:

[W]hile metatheoretical work is removed from the social world, it is far from being irrelevant to our understanding of how that world works. Thus in my view, metatheorizing is not only a legitimate undertaking in itself, but it is further legitimized by its utility in enhancing our understanding of sociocultural reality.<sup>28</sup>

Zhao, for his part, assigns great importance to metatheory which is, after all, a tool to be used to deal with certain disciplinary problems. There are situations in which meta-study (metatheory) becomes not only necessary, but also inevitable. Nevertheless, metatheory is particularly important under two conditions: the first involves the sudden occurrence of some fundamental shift in the conception of the subject matter in a discipline. Meta-study (metatheory) is needed in this situation for remapping the cognitive status of a changing discipline. An example is the modern revolution in physics created by Einstein's theory of relativity, which led to the development of the philosophy of science. The second condition under which meta-study (metatheory) is particularly important involves the failure of a discipline to progress.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, metatheory may be the source of a new concept that alters or adapts previous theoretical predictions; it may suggest a new problem, focus, or branch; or it may contain an assumption that, upon reflection, leads to a new theoretical claim explaining that the metatheories underlying theories seemingly can yield important benefits to theories which are often formulated with determined avoidance of metatheoretical issues.<sup>30</sup>

Besides, the kind of reflexive work undertaken by metatheorists can be useful in clarifying our theoretical differences and showing us where greater integration is possible. Such a role brings metatheorizing from the realm of abstraction to a very practical place in helping the discipline, as a whole, to overcome its difficulties.<sup>31</sup>

### (d) How can Metatheorizing be useful in the present study?

While this model has been developed mainly within the field of sociology, and more precisely in theoretical sociology, it can be applied to

other fields of research. Thus, Ritzer mentioned that the various articles written by many theorists about metatheorizing reflects the booming interest among sociologists and other social scientists involved in meta-analytic work of all types: meta-methodology, meta-data-analysis, and especially metatheorizing.<sup>32</sup>

In the interest of the present study, which is within the domain of socio-historical change, *Mu* is applicable for many reasons. First, metatheorizing is the systematic study of theories and theorists, and these are present in any scientific enterprise and in any field of research. Second, metatheorizing as a theoretical study provides a precise model for understanding the works of theorists and the structure of the intellectual, social, internal, and external variables (factors) which affect their theorization. In other words, the goal of the present study is to gain a better understanding of Bennabi's theory of civilization by utilizing the four dimensions (internal-social, internal-intellectual, external-intellectual, and external-social) of the subtype of metatheorizing (*Mu*) oriented toward greater understanding. Third, *Mu* requires the comparative method to provide a deeper comprehension, more adequate evaluation, and critical analysis of theory and theorist. The comparative method, which will be used in this study, uses the *Mu* model to gain a deep understanding of the issue of civilization in the thought of Bennabi, and compare his approach with those of the same concern, such as Ibn Khaldūn and Toynbee as the master-minds of civilization studies.<sup>33</sup>

## (2) Some Techniques

As mentioned previously, the use of metatheorizing in its *Mu* type requires the use of combined methods or modes of analysis. Therefore, this research uses a mixed-methods approach by combining three methods: 1) historical analysis, 2) comparative analysis, and 3) content analysis. The mixed methods can complement each other and provide a greater understanding of the topic under study.

Historical analysis is to be used for understanding how ideas and historical forces are developed. A careful historical analysis of circumstances and various trends of thought, dominant paradigms during

Bennabi's time, as well as socio-historical processes may provide a ground for the formulation of an alternative approach to the subject of movement of civilization. Historical analysis, in this regard, helps to take into consideration the factor of time, and the past in particular. It helps also to understand the critical processes of societal and intellectual change, and the development of ideas during Bennabi's life.

The comparative method is intended to transform the field (civilizational studies) from an essentially descriptive enterprise that emphasizes the ideographic attributes of socio-historical inquiry and the phenomenon of civilization to an endeavor that could explain and predict such a phenomenon through the formulation of general laws. Through comparison the author intends to understand and discover the differences and similarities between Bennabi's approach and others'. It may help also to draw inferences about why Bennabi's ideas developed in such a way and not in other ways. In other words, the differences help us to discover the causes or the factors behind this process or that of theorization.

The adoption of the content analysis method finds its *raison d'être* in the nature of the study which is based on the analysis of Bennabi's writings, as well as other writings of the same concern, and relate it to the study of his approach. The content analysis method is used as a technique to deal with concepts, assumptions, and terms used by Bennabi regarding the study of civilization. This mode of analysis is useful where Bennabi's views and roots of approach are limited to documentary sources that attempt to address the meaning of his writings. Thus, the analysis of the content of his writings is applied in order to understand his expressions. In other words, if Bennabi, as the subject of this study, is no longer alive, he can be studied only through the records of his activities, through what his contemporaries mention about him, or through the writings he has left us.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, this study attempts to uncover the underlying structure of Bennabi's approach, and to look to his various conceptions as a unit or system in order to gain an in-depth understanding based on *Mu*. Furthermore, the use of content analysis may help to relate to the various terms used by Bennabi to formulate his approach in tackling the different dimensions of the phenomenon of civilization.



Consequently, the analysis of Bennabi's writings, as well as other sources, will be put in the context of finding the socio-intellectual foundations of his approach to civilization, that is, to limit the analysis to the main issues and the main context of the present study because in content analysis, as mentioned by Krippendorff, the author has to "define the boundaries beyond which its analysis does not extend".<sup>35</sup>

### (3) Some Operational Definitions

Some terms and concepts used to deal with the proposed issue are considered key tools to research and develop a clear understanding of its whole body. Therefore, in addition to the terms related directly to *Mu*, i.e., internal-social, internal-intellectual, external-social and external-intellectual, the author attempts to state other operational definitions which are key terms to be employed in the study. They are as follows:

#### (a) Paradigm

The term "paradigm" is first introduced by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. However, according to Masterman, he uses paradigm in no less than twenty-one different senses in his book.<sup>36</sup> The author does not intend to enter the debate around the philosophical status of Kuhn's perspective, or the controversy surrounding its applicability to the present study. The author is of the view that the debate about that issue would take many pages and would be peripheral to the task of the topic of the present study. Accordingly, despite the controversy, the author will simply assume the usefulness of such a concept for this study.

In this regard, the term paradigm will be used as the fundamental image of the subject matter within such a field of research, or the way of looking at things, a shared assumption which governs the outlook of an epoch and its approach to a scientific problem. It serves to define what should be studied, what questions should be asked, how they should be asked, and what rules should be followed in interpreting the answers obtained.

A paradigm is the broadest unit of consensus within a science or field of research and serves to differentiate one scientific community (or sub-community) from another. It subsumes, defines, and inter-relates the exemplars, theories and methods, and instruments that exist within it.<sup>37</sup>

#### (b) Macro-Micro Continuum

Social reality is divided into levels. There is no hard and fast limit between micro and macro level: they serve as an epistemological device to be able to deal with the complexity of the social world.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the notion of levels of social reality (macro and micro) does not imply that social reality is really divided into levels. In fact, it is best viewed as a wide range of social entities in constant flux. In order to deal with this enormous complexity, sociologists have abstracted various levels for sociological analysis. Thus, the levels are sociological constructs rather than states really existing in the social world.<sup>39</sup> The continuum of micro-macro starts from individual thought and action at the most micro level, and as it proceeds towards the larger society it becomes macro, such as the organizations, the societies and the world at large.<sup>40</sup>

#### (c) Schools

The term "school" is widely used in the history and sociology of sociological thought. It refers to groupings of academicians and researchers who may or may not constitute an identifiable administrative unit. It takes many forms; a group of contemporaries adopting similar ideas (basic presuppositions, core theories, subject areas, or a combination of these). The notion of school is also used in the sense of a group of theorists sharing the same philosophy; or of an identifiable theoretical or philosophical perspective to which significant figures in history may be attached; or a general theoretical orientation, a tradition or paradigm. In this regard we can mention the four famous Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence (Hanafi, Shāfi'i, Māliki and Hanbali), the Chicago School, the Frankfurt School, Khaldūnian School, the Cyclical School of history, etc.<sup>41</sup> The term "school" will be used in the same context in the present study.



## (4) The Sources

The main sources of the present study are divided into two categories. First, are the original works of Bennabi who published all his books under one title, *Mushkilāt al-Ḥaḍārah* (Problems of Civilization), with specific subtitles for each book. The authentic edition which was published in Arabic by Dār al-Fikr will be the principal reference, while translated editions in English will be consulted whenever the need arises.

The second category includes works on sociology and its various branches, philosophy of history, anthropology, history, and other social sciences will be used and consulted in analyzing Bennabi's framework and his approach to civilization.

The author will also use other works as secondary sources, especially works on Bennabi's life or thought, works on the different schools and trends of thought that have a relationship with his works, and history books that recorded the political, social, and cultural events of his time.

## I

## Civilization: Concept and Approaches

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a general overview of civilization in terms of its concept and approaches. That is, if we are to speak of Bennabi's concept of civilization and his approach to it, we must have at the outset some definition of what we mean by "civilization" as well as what we mean by "being civilized".

Furthermore, the author argues that a clear distinction must be drawn between civilization as a multi-faceted phenomenon, and its partial aspects. In tackling the issue of civilization, in general, it is important also to mention the existence of inadequate approaches to "civilization" founded on one or two aspects of the phenomenon while ignoring the other aspects.

Thus, the body of this chapter is an exposition and discussion of these approaches. The author also argues that an interdisciplinary approach is most productive for both theory and research in civilization because of its ability to cover all aspects of the phenomenon.

For the purpose of the present study, whose main concern is to undertake a metatheoretical journey, it is important to have a somewhat more exact definition of the term in order to provide a framework for analyzing Bennabi's conception of civilization. In fact, he developed his approach in relation to internal/external and intellectual/social factors. An investigation into the development of the concept of

"civilization" and the development of approaches to its issues throughout history seems to be of great importance. It can help to identify the dominant paradigms and schools that have had a leading role in establishing the field of civilization studies. However, to undertake such a task two difficulties arise.

First, there is a problem in determining the concept of civilization which arises from the diversity of cultural and linguistic traditions in various civilizations, especially those of Western and Muslim traditions. In line with the metatheoretical approach applied to the present study, the author finds it useful to discuss the concept of civilization in both traditions. In fact, there are two reasons for doing so; on the one hand, Bennabi wrote both in Arabic and French, a matter that makes his work relevant to both the cultural and scientific traditions of the Islamic and Western languages. On the other hand, the term civilization has other synonyms used in different languages of the Muslim world.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, to put Bennabi's concept of civilization in its context, it seems necessary to examine the different meanings and evaluations assigned to the concept of "civilization" in both traditions.

The second difficulty lies in the controversy between the various definitions assigned to civilization by different writers. For instance, historians, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and others define civilization in different ways with respect to their areas of concentration.<sup>2</sup> They differ on the concept, the essential ingredients of civilization, and its course in history. Hence, it is useful to provide a general overview of the different perspectives used to approach civilization in different fields of research.<sup>3</sup>

The following sections elaborate on both the changing vocabulary of the concept of civilization and the various approaches to it.

#### THE CONCEPT OF CIVILIZATION: A CHANGING VOCABULARY

It would be pleasant, as Braudel asserts, to be able to define the word "civilization" simply and precisely, as one defines a straight line, a triangle or a chemical element. The term "civilization" is widely used by historians, anthropologists, and other workers in the social sciences,

but has no single, fixed meaning. Thus, any discussion of the concept must begin with the question of definition.

Unfortunately, the humanities and the social sciences have yet to define their terms and concepts as precisely as the natural sciences because of the complexity of the social phenomena which the social sciences, in particular, take as the subject matter for their investigation<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, within the social sciences there are frequent variations in the meaning of the simplest words, according to the thought that uses and informs them.

The previous passage suggests what is generally meant by the term civilization, but the meaning assigned to "civilization" within Western and Muslim scientific traditions may contribute to specify what is generally meant by civilization.

#### (1) Civilization in the Western Scientific Tradition

##### (a) *The Literal Definition of Civilization*

Literally speaking, the root of the term "civilization" in Greek is to lie outstretched, and to be located. Thus, a city lies, and the citizen makes his/her bed on which s/he must lie down. The term also derives from the Latin word *civites* which means a city, and *Civis* who is the inhabitant of a city, or *Civilis* that means civility or what is related to the inhabitant of a city. It also means a citizen.<sup>5</sup>

Despite its literal Greek-Latin origins, the word "civilization" is relatively new. It emerged late, and unobtrusively, in 18<sup>th</sup> century France. It was formed from "civilized" and "to civilize", which had long existed and were in general use in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe.<sup>6</sup>

In modern English, it derived its meanings from its Greek-Latin roots as well as the cultural traditions of the West. In this regard, *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives a wide range of meanings for the term "civilization" and its derivations: "a developed or advanced state of human society; a particular stage or a particular type of this". It is also the humanization of humans in society ... to civilize is to bring out of a state of barbarism, to instruct in the arts of life and thus elevate in the scale of humanity; to enlighten, refine, and polish. In another instance, to civilize is to domesticate. It is the act of domestication. Furthermore, civilization is the action or process of civilizing or being civilized.



Another term which is derived from civilization is "civility." The latter has many meanings such as conformity to the principles of social order, behavior befitting a citizen, good citizenship. Civility also means behavior proper to the interaction of civilized people, ordinary courtesy or politeness, as opposed to rudeness of behavior.<sup>7</sup>

*The Oxford Thesaurus* helps to clarify the meanings of "civilization" in English. Five terms are interlinked: the "city" which is the metropolis, the municipality, the town; the "citizen" who is the resident, the inhabitant and the dweller of the city or the town; "civility" which means courtesy, politeness, respect, urbanity, amiability; "civilization" which has the meaning of refinement, cultivation, enlightenment, edification, sophistication, polished, culture, mores, and customs; finally "civilize" which means enlightened, refined, polished, edified, educated and cultured, and includes the verbs to tame, to domesticate, to broaden, to elevate, and to acculturate.<sup>8</sup>

The various meanings revolve around a few concepts such as city, dwelling, politeness and refinement, cultured and the elevation of the human condition, as well as the existence of a group of people who are involved in acquiring such characteristics to enable them to be at a higher stage of development, according to social order or customs.

The inherited meanings were, however, joined by others. Indeed, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century the term civilization has been accompanied by different and broader connotations acquired throughout the last two centuries in the civilizational history of the West, and have influenced peoples' concept of civilization in Europe, in particular, and in the West, in general.<sup>9</sup>

#### (b) *The Terminological Definition of Civilization*

From the number of definitions that have been given to "civilization" in *The Oxford English Dictionary* and *The Oxford Thesaurus*, it is obvious that they reflect the impact of cultural traditions and the civilizational history of the West. A historical conceptual analysis may help us to understand the historical development of the term within European history.

#### (1b) *Civilization as possession of good manners and advanced stage of growth*

The idea of civilization was first conceived and developed by 18<sup>th</sup> century French writers such as Voltaire (1694-1778) and Mirabeau (1749-1791), and then borrowed by English writers<sup>10</sup> to oppose the concept of barbarity or "barbarism."<sup>11</sup> A civilized society is the society that possesses good manners and an advanced stage of development. The idea of civilization here refers to the state of being civilized, that is, to possess good manners, politeness courtesy and mores which are signs of an advanced stage of the human condition. This is opposite to barbarity or barbarism.

It was during the zeal of European worldwide expansion in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that Western powers promoted the civilization of the West as the standard of human development. In this context, civilization used to refer to achievements in such aesthetic and intellectual pursuits as architecture, painting, literature, sculpture, music, philosophy, and science, and to the success which a people has in establishing control over their human and physical environment.<sup>12</sup>

However, the degree of civilization, according to Clough, is related to the extent to which a group of people provides physical and social security for its members. If a group of people produces aesthetic and intellectual works of high merit and provides physical and social security for its members, then they can be considered civilized. Conversely, the less a group of people realizes either quality or quantity as tenets of civilization, the less civilized it is.<sup>13</sup> Clough introduces the concept of physical and social security as two main factors playing an important role in the civilizing process.

In mentioning the 19<sup>th</sup> century vocabulary regarding the use of civilization, Huntington writes:

The concept of civilization provided a standard by which to judge societies, and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans devoted much intellectual, diplomatic, and political energy to elaborating the criteria by which non-European societies might be judged.<sup>14</sup>

In line with the previous definitions, Tylor defined civilization as a "degree of advanced culture, in which the arts and sciences, as well as political life are well developed."<sup>15</sup> In Tylor's definition, "civilization" is accompanied by another word, "culture", which was first introduced to the English language by Tylor who used "culture" and "civilization" as equivalent terms.<sup>16</sup>

Childe was among modernist anthropologists who conceptualizes civilization according to the progressive thought of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He sees the essential characteristics of civilization as internal social hierarchies, specialization, cities and large populations and the growth of mathematics and writing.<sup>17</sup>

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century thought in Europe confined civilization to Europe, and conceived it as "the ideal" rather than "an ideal" for human development. In line with this, Europe promoted itself as the civilization in contrast to pre-civilized societies outside Europe. Therefore, civilization was used in its singular form because in the European modernist thought of that time Europe was synonymous with civilization and vice versa.<sup>18</sup>

Aware of their bias, Western intellectuals tried to avoid the use of "civilization" in its singular form, especially after the development of cultural anthropological studies on various peoples and societies of the world outside Europe. Hence, the singular use of civilization gave way to the plural use of the term.

Accordingly, as Chandler writes, civilization lost its prestige, and the recognition of the existence of many civilizations paved the way for two notions regarding the understanding of civilization. First, Europe moved from "the ideal" to being "an ideal" among many ideals, a civilization side by side with other civilizations. Second, the use of civilization as an advanced stage of human development gave way to the concept of civilization as a cultural identity, which distinguishes such society from another and denotes a way of organizing that society. In other words, civilization acquired two meanings: a specific way to organize human society, a socioeconomic system, and a way of thinking about reality, a cognitive structure.<sup>19</sup>

The assumption provided by Chandler was the hallmark of the debate of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century upon the realization that Europe was

not the ideal civilization, rather, one of the civilizations of the world. Therefore, civilization began to be understood on two levels: if used in its singular sense, it denotes the concept of a universal framework for understanding human conditions, and the course of historical transformations witnessed by humankind since the dawn of history. When used in its plural sense, it denotes the identities of various societies or cultures.<sup>20</sup>

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century concept of civilization in Europe was partly due to the development of cultural anthropological studies on various societies outside Europe by European scientists. It was partly also due to German intellectual tradition and German intellectuals who contributed to the development of the term "civilization", and the following section is a discussion of the German contribution to the development of the concept of civilization in Western cultural traditions.

#### (2b) *The German influence on the development of the concept*

While French and English writers developed the concept of civilization to mean an advanced stage of development and a standard for other societies to follow, German thinkers distinguished between civilization and *Kultur* (culture). In fact, German writers and thinkers, as well as philosophers and historians, stressed the uniqueness of German culture; they considered that every nation has its own civilization and culture. Therefore, from their input, civilization becomes plural.<sup>21</sup>

Many German, Roman, Hebrew, American, Japanese, Chinese, Arab, or Egyptian writers began to write about the course of different civilizations instead of talking about the universal process of civilization as in the French and English tradition of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Norbert Elias, in *The Civilizing Process*, stood as one of the most prominent thinkers who undertook an investigation of the concept of civilization within the Western scientific tradition. For Elias, "civilization" refers to a wide variety of facts. It includes the level of technology, the type of manners, the development of scientific knowledge, and religious ideas and customs. It can refer to the type of dwelling, or the manner in which men and women live together, to the form of judicial punishment, or to the way in which food is prepared.<sup>22</sup>



In other words, for Elias, it is somewhat difficult to summarize everything that can be described as civilization. Although he developed his concept of civilization through his study of French society during the age of the revolution, he examined the genesis of the term and undertook a comparative study in both the German and the French-English traditions.

The German concept of *Kultur*, according to Elias, refers essentially to intellectual, artistic, and religious "facts", and has a tendency to draw a sharp dividing line between facts of this sort, on the one hand, and political, economic, and social "facts", on the other. Civilization in French and English usage describes a process, or at least the result of a process. It refers to something which is constantly in motion, constantly moving forward. The German concept of *Kultur* has a different relationship to motion. It refers to human products which are like "flowers of the field," to works of art, books, religious or philosophical systems, in which the individuality of a people expresses itself.<sup>23</sup>

There is common meaning which indicates the social dimension of both concepts. Both bear the stamp, not of sects or families but of whole populations, or perhaps only of certain classes of people.<sup>24</sup> This denotes that civilization is the accomplishment of a society, while *Kultur* refers to the dynamic character of civilization and intellectuality.

In line with Elias's notion of civilization, Huntington, in his article *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, sees a civilization as a cultural entity on a higher level. He considers that civilization is the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species.<sup>25</sup> Not only that, but throughout history, civilizations have provided the broadest identifications for people.<sup>26</sup>

An expert in international politics with close connections to the United States Department of Foreign Affairs, his aim seems to be the shift of international relations into the use of civilizations as units of analysis and entities instead of nation-states and ideological blocks.

He speaks of "levels of identity" because, as he claims, villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, religious groups, all have distinct cultures at different levels of cultural heterogeneity. But a civilization is the broadest cultural entity.<sup>27</sup> The nation-state seems to be outdated

according to Huntington, and there must be a shift in the concern to a broad concept that can help policy makers to deal with it.

For Huntington, there is a broad agreement among students of civilization about the existence of central propositions concerning the nature, identity, and dynamics of civilizations. Thus, most researchers agree that civilizations are the broadest cultural entities. They are comprehensive, that is, none of their constituent units can be fully understood without reference to the encompassing civilization. Civilizations are mortal but also long-lived; they evolve, adapt, and are the most enduring of human associations. They are dynamic; they rise and fall; they merge and divide; they also disappear. Finally, scholars generally agree on the identification of major civilizations in history and on those that exist in the modern world.<sup>28</sup>

What is important in Huntington's conception is that he puts civilization in the context of history and development throughout time. He also combines civilization with religion, a central defining characteristic of civilization:<sup>29</sup>

[O]f all the objective elements which define civilizations, however, the most important usually is religion ... to a very large degree, the major civilizations in human history have been closely identified with the world's great religions.<sup>30</sup>

On the distinctive place religion plays in the formation and development of civilizations, he shares the views of Ibn Khaldūn, Toynbee, Bennabi, and other scholars of civilization. To sum up Huntington's notion, civilization is a cultural entity based mainly on religion, historical process, and has space-time location. The latter helps distinguish between many civilizations throughout history.

Before concluding the discussion of the various connotations of the term "civilization" in Western traditions, it is important to mention that there are a number of meanings in common use today. Diversity in meanings shows the dynamism of civilization, the complexity of the phenomenon, and the wide range of connotations which civilization may have within one cultural tradition.



## (2) Civilization in the Muslim Scientific Tradition

After discussing the changing vocabulary of "civilization" in the West, a discussion of the term in the Islamic scientific tradition (Muslim) may help to understand it from another point of view. In this context, literal and terminological definitions are discussed in order to follow the line of development.

## (a) The Literal Meaning of Civilization

In Arabic, the current term *Ḥaḍārah* is used as a synonym of the English word "civilization". In the famous traditional dictionary of the Arabic language *Lisān al-ʿArab* it means presence as opposed to absence...sedentary vis-a-vis nomadic Bedouin. It has a relationship with the term *Ḥaḍīrah* which means a city or big community.<sup>31</sup> It also means staying in a city as opposed to nomadic Bedouin, also the inhabitant of the cities and villages.<sup>32</sup>

In *An Arabic English Lexicon*, Lane mentions that the Arabic term *Ḥaḍārī* is used to mean a land or house inhabited, peopled, and well peopled. It means a land in a flourishing state, in a state contrary to desolation, waste or ruin. Another meaning is a land colonized and cultivated, or well cultivated. In addition, it means a house in a state of repair.<sup>33</sup> This definition denotes two aspects of civilization in the Arabic context: first, stabilizing or settling in a place or land or house, and second, civilization is a state of development and richness.

*Ḥaḍārah* also means "a building, a structure, an edifice; or perhaps the act of building."<sup>34</sup> This definition emphasizes the significance of structure and the act of building. In other words, civilization can be a construction process ... and the act of establishing a prosperous life for humankind.

When humans no longer have to submit to brute necessity but begin instead to dominate their environment, they are at last in a position to remold their patterns of living, and to transmit a common social heritage. When this process continues to the point where men exert a wide control over nature and have developed a highly complex culture pattern – including an urban structure superimposed upon an agricultural base – they can be said to possess a civilization.

In the *Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, the reader finds a thorough analysis of the word *Ḥaḍārah* and its related derived words.<sup>35</sup> In this book, six terms are interlinked and may help to clarify the meanings of civilization in Arabic usage. First, there is *ḥaḍara* (verb) which means to be present or be in the presence. The second term is *ḥaḍārah* (noun) which means to be settled, sedentary (in a civilized region, as opposed to leading a nomadic existence). Third, *ḥaḍar* (noun) which means a civilized region with towns and villages and a settled population (as opposed to desert, steppe), settled population, town dwellers. Fourth is *ḥaḍārī* (adj.) which means settled, sedentary, resident, not nomadic, non-Bedouin, urban, and town dweller. Fifth is *ḥaḍīrah* (noun) which means a civilization, culture, settledness, sedentariness. Sixth is *ḥaḍīrah* (noun), which means a capital city, metropolis, city (as a center of civilization).<sup>36</sup>

Other terms which have close links with *ḥaḍrah* are *madaniyyah*, *tamaddun* and *tamḍīn*. In fact, the word *tamaddun* is derived from the Arabic word *Madinah* (literally, "city" or "town") and *tamaddun* (literally, urbanization). Close to the latter terms, there is also the term *madaniyyah* which literally means urbanism.<sup>37</sup> The three interrelated terms of city, urbanization, and urbanism denote that the city is the starting point of the urbanization process to achieve the state of urbanism. In the same context, *madīnah* and *ḥaḍīrah* are identical, and both mean a city and a town.

However, regarding the modern use of the terms in the Muslim tradition, there are some differences. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern thinkers and writers in the Muslim world have been using certain terms in contrast with the term civilization used by the Europeans. They used a variety of terms such as *ʿUmrān*, *ḥaḍārah*, *madaniyyah*, *nahḍah*, *tamaddun*, and *madaniyat*.<sup>38</sup> Despite the different terms used to denote the English-French term of civilization, the most famous and popularly used term in Arabic is *ḥaḍārah*. Beg notes that the popular term for civilization in some Muslim countries is not *ḥaḍārah* but *tamaddun* or *tamadun*. The latter is widely used in Malay culture and language.<sup>39</sup>

The first changes were brought to the Arab society by the coming of Islam, especially by the migration (hijrah) of the Prophet Muhammad

(SAAS)<sup>40</sup> from Makkah to Madinah. He changed the name of the city of Yathrib to Madinah (a city). Furthermore, he made changes in the foundations of social relationships. Instead of tribal-based, relationships were now based on the religious idea of brotherhood that brought together different people from different social strata and different ethnic groups to form a new web of social relationships. These changes in the social relationships transformed the culture of people from tribal paganism into an ideas-based civil Islamic culture, which was input for a new civilizing process and a new Islamic entity.

The city is the starting point of any civilizing process, and there are arguments amongst archaeologists, pre-historians, ancient historians and sociologists over the origins of civilization and the place of cities within the civilizing process.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the Prophet, as the founder of a new society and a new civilization, realized that there must be some development of urban society so that the culture is not nomadic, tribal, dispersed, and unable to leave significant physical evidence of its presence. In this regard, he established the city of Madinah on the first day of his migration because it was meant to be the nucleus of the transformation of civilization that took place after the advent of Islam.

In terms of culture, it is evident that the notion of "city", indicative of a discrete way of life, was available throughout the history of the Muslim world since the establishment of Madinah. All civilizations have developed significant central places in which key social functions are located, and where populations have congregated. We can mention the establishment of Kufah, Basrah, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Bukhara and other cities in the Muslim world as centers of civilized sedentary life. Many Islamic traditions focus on the city (or *madinah*) with its mosque, bathhouse, and markets as the locality wherein a devout life can be achieved.<sup>42</sup>

#### (b) The Terminological Definition of Civilization

The definition of the term "civilization" within the Muslim cultural traditions witnessed two stages. It was first conceived by Ibn Khaldūn in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the second stage. The following two sections are a discussion of both stages.

#### (1b) The first stage

The term civilization was first conceived in the Muslim world as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE, 8<sup>th</sup> century of the Muslim era by Ibn Khaldūn. He introduced three terms: the first two are *ḥaḍārah* and *ʿumrān*, comparable with the western term civilization, and the third is *ʿilm al-ʿUmran* which could be translated as "the science of civilization". He considered civilization as a quality peculiar to humans. This means that human beings have to dwell and settle together in cities and hamlets for the comfort of companionship and for the satisfaction of human needs.<sup>43</sup> He also gave another meaning to the term civilization as "the necessary character of human social organization."<sup>44</sup> With this definition, Ibn Khaldūn focused on the social dimension of the term, while in the previous definition he focused on the collective settlement in cities. Ibn Khaldūn's concept underlies the social dimension as well as the dynamic character of the phenomenon of civilization in the course of human development.

In mentioning Ibn Khaldūn, one must not neglect the contributions of other Muslim historians and philosophers who came both before and after him. Names like al-Fārābī (259–339 AH / 872–950 CE), al-Ṭabarī (224–310 AH / 838–922 CE), al-Masʿūdī (d. 346 AH / 957 CE), Ibn Hazm (d. 456 AH / 1063 CE), and others were of great importance for Ibn Khaldūn in developing his theory of civilization, but unlike him they did not develop particular theories in this regard. Indeed, Ibn Khaldūn is an outstanding figure in the rise and fall of civilization, and can be classified as representing the first stage in the development of the Islamic concept of civilization.<sup>45</sup>

#### (2b) The second stage

The second stage in the development of the concept of civilization among Muslim scientists, scholars, academicians, activists, and intellectuals in general began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the first confrontations with modern Europe, and the emergence of the Islamic revival.

In this stage, two trends emerged in the Arab world to interpret the term "civilization". In the first, we find writers like Rifaah al-Tahtawi (1801–1873), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and Rashid Reda



(1865–1935) translating it into the Arabic term *madaniyyah*, and its synonym *tamaddun* to mean civilization.<sup>46</sup> In the second trend, in the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term *ḥaḍārah* was used to mean civilization. It became popular among scientific and intellectual circles in the Arab world, and Bennabi was a pioneer in choosing it to denote “civilization” since the early days of his intellectual career begun with the publication of *Le phénomène coranique* (The Qur’anic Phenomenon) in 1947. Furthermore, Bennabi gave the series the title *Mushkilāt al-Ḥaḍārah* (Problems of Civilization) with a specific title for each book of the series.

In other languages of the Muslim world, the term used is *madaniyyah* or its derivations. Beg notes that:

The Persian intellectuals have coined two terms for civilization, namely, *madaniyah* and *tamadun*... the Turks, on the other hand, use the term *medeniyet* and also *medeniyeti* in the meaning of civilization... in East Africa, the speakers of the Swahili language have been using the term *Utamaduni* (derived from Arabic *tamadun*) as the term for civilization... in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh there is no universally accepted term for civilization. The speakers of Urdu and Bengali have been using two words (sometimes interchangeably) to express the sense of culture and civilization, viz., *tahzib* (*tahdhib*) and *tamadun*. Some Pakistani Urdu lexicographers use the term *tahzib* in the dual sense of culture and civilization, but they restrict the use of *tamadun* in the sense of civilization... Bangali Muslim intellectuals have used the word *tamadun* in the sense of culture. They also use the word *tahzib* in the sense of civilization... on the other hand, the Malays of Malaysia and Indonesia unanimously use the word *tamaddun* (popularly spelt as *tamadun*) as the term for civilization.<sup>47</sup>

Taking into consideration the different terms used to mean civilization in the Muslim cultural traditions, it is important to mention that all the terms used are derived from Arabic. However, despite the differences in the use of the terms, their meanings tend to converge to denote civilization, with a specific focus for each term on certain aspects of civilization.

It is also worth mentioning that at first the modern use was *tamadun* and *madaniyat*, but after rediscovering Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqāddimah* and influenced by him, Arabs preferred the term *ḥaḍārah* while non-Arab Muslims preferred the use of *madaniyat* and *tamadun* which are close in meaning.

In the quest for an appropriate term for civilization in the Muslim scientific and cultural tradition, *ḥaḍārah*, *tamaddun* or *tamadun* are the terms used. However, Ibn Khaldūn's term *ḥaḍārah* is the most appropriate one to express the concept of civilization in its modern sense. Linguistically, *ḥaḍārah* is related to the civilizing and urbanization processes. It is also related to the city and its spirit. It has social content, as well as connotations of presence, the sedentary and the inhabited where social relationships and interchange will develop. People cooperate, organize themselves, and build cities and institutions. Thus, *ḥaḍārah*, in its linguistic meaning, focuses upon the social aspect. Civilization cannot emerge unless there are social relationships among people resulting in cooperation, organization, and order in a specific place.

Both the Muslim and the Western use agree on certain rudimentary elements of civilization which are the presence of the city, order or organization, and the sedentary life of its inhabitants. This is because the human being, using Ibn Khaldūn's words, is a social being by nature.<sup>48</sup> In other words, he has the desire to live in an organized and orderly community. This is part of the human instinct that governs behavior in its social and civilizational sphere, and has always been an objective throughout the history of humankind.

### (3) Conclusion

To sum up the different definitions attributed to the term “civilization,” it is important to mention that they agree on certain fundamental elements, such as the presence of several (though not necessarily all) conditions within a society or groups of independent societies, and some that could be used as criteria for any society to be called a “civilization.”<sup>49</sup> The following conditions can be deduced:

*First*, there will be some development of urban society, that is, of city life, so that the culture is not nomadic, dispersed, and thus able to leave significant physical evidence of its presence.

*Second*, there will be some form of government by which people administer their political needs and responsibilities.

*Third*, a form of literacy will develop, so that one group may communicate with another, and more importantly, one generation may communicate with another in writing.

*Fourth*, human beings will become toolmakers, able to transform, however modestly, their physical environment, their social, intellectual, economic, political, moral, as well as spiritual lives.

*Fifth*, some degree of specialization of functions will have begun, usually at the work place, so that pride, place, and purpose function as cohesive elements in the society.

*Sixth*, a network of social relationships will have emerged to transform spiritual values into social values.

*Last*, there will be a belief system and concept of God or a higher being, though not necessarily through revealed religion, from which people obtain the authenticity and the *raison d'être* for their existence, as well as the vision which leads them beyond everyday life. In other words, there will be an outlook based on religious ideas in its broadest sense.

#### APPROACHES TO CIVILIZATION

The previous section denotes that throughout history the study of civilization attracted many researchers and fields of research. Therefore, the causes, emergence, rise, interactions, achievements, decline, and fall of civilizations have been explored at length by distinguished historians, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and others.

Although there is broad agreement on key propositions concerning the nature, identity, and dynamics of civilizations, there exist differences in perspective, methodology, focus, and concepts which pervade the various approaches.

In the following sections the author will discuss various approaches to civilization within the two dominant paradigms of philosophy of

history and social sciences with their two sub paradigms, or broad perspectives of anthropology and sociology.

The presentation will be more general to provide a framework for understanding the issue of civilization in general, and Bennabi's conception in particular. (For a specific analysis of the paradigms, the schools of thought and their approaches to civilization with a comparative analysis of Bennabi's approach, see Chapter Seven).

#### (1) The Approach of Philosophy of History

Philosophy of History was born out of the human endeavor to give rational explanations to events. It is an attempt to discover the law that regulates them, and to trace a meaning in their operation that introduces logical order into events of the past, illuminates the present, and casts some light into the future.<sup>50</sup> In other words, while history is a "first order" study of past actions, events and situations, philosophy of history is a "second order" study, the study of the study of these topics. It can be considered a "meta" study, which means it does not deal directly with events, actions, and situations; rather, it is an indirect study that seeks to explain and elaborate answers about the past. Therefore, philosophers of history typically aim to arrive at comprehensive views of the process of history as a whole. They view themselves as synthesizing or generalizing on the basis of detailed data supplied by more "workaday" historians.<sup>51</sup>

Although there is an academic distinction between the subject matter of historians and philosophers of history, it is difficult to find a historian who does not have a sort of philosophy about his/her historical writings. Thus, there is no sharp border between the subject matter of the two disciplines. It is difficult to treat history without taking into consideration some philosophical questions regarding the causes of events, the course of history, the process of change, and the forces behind the movement of history.

Historians seek to describe not only what happened in the past but also why society changes. Any research of this kind raises a number of fundamental questions. The first, pertains to the actors of history in terms of the role of providence, the individual, and the group in history.



The second deals with the presence of universal patterns in historical movements, the extent to which historical events are unique or fit into patterns. The third addresses the problem of whether there is progress in human affairs, a decline, or a cyclical movement of ups and downs.

The answers to these questions vary with different philosophical views of humankind, and give rise to many schools of thought, which in turn may vary in their approaches.

There are many schools of thought and views on the question of the actors in history. Some emphasize the presence of divine will, such as St. Augustine (354-430) in his *City of God*, in which he maintained that God's purpose is revealed in the unfolding of historical events. Beginning with the Old Testament and up to his own time, he traced the working of divine providence.

Others minimized the role of providence while exalting the role of the individual in the historical process. The latter was the case of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) who considered that "the decisive and constructive forces in history are its great men and heroes."<sup>52</sup>

Some schools discounted this generalization by emphasizing the impact of economic and other impersonal forces (environment, economic products). The best example is the Marxist thought which emphasizes the pre-eminence of economic factors in historical change.

Some philosophers see history as progressive. For example, Plato, Herder, Hegel, and many other European thinkers tried in different ways to combine the Judeo-Christian views of time and history as progress in a straight line with the classical notion of historical cycles.<sup>53</sup>

Cyclical views, too, have frequently been maintained, both in antiquity and later. Vico (1668-1744), who is regarded by Renaissance scholars as the pioneer of new science, took this line, as did Toynbee, who tended to apply the empirical method to history, in so far as he holds that civilization, even though it does not exactly have a fixed life span, nevertheless exhibits a common pattern of development and decay.<sup>54</sup>

Answers also vary according to which units to adopt to analyze and write history. Although the products of historical scholarship have become increasingly sophisticated and numerous, the problem of how

to write world history, and which unit of analysis is the most acceptable have remained unresolved. The need to find a solution, however, has grown increasingly toward a global history.

Consequently, in the absence of a generally accepted conceptual scheme which could provide a framework of unity, those who have attempted to write world history have so far used three approaches. They used the model of series (sequence) of cultures or civilizations in which all cultures (civilizations) are subject to the same developmental pattern; the progress model; and the simple side-by-side histories of humankind's diverse peoples.<sup>55</sup>

As a matter of fact, the second and the third approach were dominant since the beginning of historiography. The works of Plato, St. Augustine, and the early Christian historians can be mentioned for the second approach, and Hegelians and Marxists, who considered history to be either linear retrogressive or linear progressive, belong to the same model. The third is an ancient approach to historiography, yet it is still supported by historians who focus on national and regional, as well as racial and ethnic histories.

The most developed approach is the first one, which is based on the sequence model. If compared with the other two, it is an attempt to break new ground in writing world history, and finding the *raison d'être* for its course. It has emerged as a result of efforts by the great scholars of civilizations such as Ibn Khaldūn, Vico, Spengler, Toynbee, Elias, Braudel, and others.

Ibn Khaldūn, for example, developed his cyclical view of history by studying the history of various dynasties in the Muslim world, Europe, and Asia both during and before his time. His concern about understanding the mechanisms of the rise and fall of states and dynasties led him first to detect in the history of those states and dynasties a pattern of conquest from the desert, followed by the corruption of the rulers as a result of luxury. After three generations, corruption prepared the way for a fresh conquest from the desert, to begin the cycle anew. Second, in the case of his society, he developed his theory of cycles which considers the cycle of rise and fall as the pattern of historical change at the level of states and dynasties.<sup>56</sup>



Three centuries after Ibn Khaldūn, Vico, in *The New Science*, presented a cyclical theory of history of all nations. Influenced by the Platonic ideal state, he sees that the real history is the "ideal, eternal history" which has three stages: the "age of the gods," to which belong the earliest institutions such as religion, family, and burial; the "age of the heroes," in which heads of families united against the class of serfs; and the "age of men," in which the plebe finally established its human rights and the legal principle of equity. The affirmation of private interests led to a decay of public spirit and the consequent breakdown of institutions, until finally there was a return to the barbarism of the state of nature, and the cycle began again on a higher level with the dawn of Christianity.<sup>57</sup>

Vico's most important contribution to the study of history is his attempt to discover a general pattern in world history. He addressed certain methodological rules to study historical change.

Vico held the view that certain periods of history had a general character that reappeared in other periods, so two different periods may have the same general character, and it is possible to argue analogically from one to the other.

Those periods tended to recur in the same order. The age of gods is followed by the age of heroes, which in turn is followed by the age of men. This is then followed by a decline into new barbarism and the age of gods. Vico explained his cycle in the following way: first, the guiding principle of history is brute strength; then valiant or heroic strength; then valiant justice; then brilliant originality; then constructive reflection; and lastly, a kind of wastrel.

This cyclical movement is not a mere rotation of history through a cycle of fixed phases; it is not a circle but a spiral.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, one may agree that Vico is a progressivist, and a cyclical thinker at the same time because he sees the cyclical movement not in circular form but in spiral form. That is to say, although it is circular, it is progressing in a spiral way and not returning to the same point that it started from.

Spengler presented world history as the story of "high" cultures (civilizations), of which so far there have been eight: Indian, Babylonian, Chinese, Egyptian, Islamic, Mexican, Classical, and Western. Based on his view that civilizations or cultures are an organic entity

with a life cycle of a determined length and with no purpose beyond their unfolding, he saw that high cultures were those among the many cultures that, because of their special dynamics, brought forth outstanding achievements. After their creative careers ended, they remained in a static state.<sup>59</sup> To explain the rise and fall of civilizations, he used terms such as "souls of cultures," "uniform cultural life spans," and organicist "organicist parallels." Spengler preferred the use of the term "culture" for civilization in the German tradition.<sup>60</sup>

For his part, Toynbee, the English historian and philosopher of civilization, viewed world history as a sequence of civilizations. The intelligible units of historical study are not nations or periods but civilizations.<sup>61</sup> He also considered civilizations to be the result of a dialectic relationship between a challenge and a response. He applied his theory to the civilizations of the world. So, he identified, analyzed, described, and examined the rise and fall of more than twenty civilizations in the course of human history.<sup>62</sup> Lastly, he was of the opinion that the religions of the world provided the soil from which civilizations grew.<sup>63</sup>

## (2) The Approach of the Social Sciences

Compared with the traditional paradigm of Philosophy of History with its various approaches to civilization, the paradigm of social sciences is a newly emerging paradigm. Within the social sciences' paradigm, there are different sub-paradigms, approaches, and schools that are interrelated, like anthropology and sociology. Sociology includes historical sociology, macro-sociology, and the sociology of change. There is no fixed boundary between them, inasmuch as they deal with the same phenomena (cultural as well as social phenomena),<sup>64</sup> and they are from the same family, that is the social sciences. Nonetheless, it is important to analyze them with respect to the issue of civilization in order to examine their contributions to its study.

### (a) The Approach of Anthropology

The first social science to address the study of human civilization and culture was Anthropology.

The British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) was the first scholar in modern times to contribute to the establishment

of anthropology as a discipline. Influenced by the intellectual debates of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which had been sparked by Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, he profoundly influenced the very beginnings of anthropology and its subject matter.<sup>65</sup> Central to Tylor's contribution was his definition of culture. For him:

culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.<sup>66</sup>

For Tylor, the founding father of anthropology, civilization and culture are synonymous, especially in the ethnological sense which is anthropology's most important addition to the social sciences, and the translation of other cultures' experiences are anthropology's lasting contribution to intellectual life.<sup>67</sup> This culture consciousness is the focal point of anthropology, as Kroeber asserts:

Of all the social sciences, anthropology is perhaps the most distinctively culture-conscious. It aims to investigate human culture as such: at all times, everywhere, in all its parts and aspects and workings. It looks for generalized findings as to how culture operates – literally, how human beings behave under given cultural conditions – and for the major developments of the history of culture.<sup>68</sup>

In the context of Tylor's concept and ethnographic framework, culture revolves around the preliterate and the prehistoric. However, the scope and subject matter of anthropology, according to Kroeber, cover respectively all times (the whole history of humanity) and cultures.

While Kroeber's claim about the subject matter of anthropology holds true throughout its history, he mentions that in its early stages, in terms of scope, it seemed preoccupied with ancient, savage, exotic and extinct peoples. It was also bounded by the spirit of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe that was under the spell of the concept of evolution in its first flush, and of the postulate of progress at its strongest.<sup>69</sup>

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans devoted much intellectual, diplomatic, and political energy to elaborating the criteria by which non-European societies might be judged sufficiently "civilized" to be accepted by the European-dominated international system.<sup>70</sup>

However, between the early and later stages of anthropology there have been huge developments in its concepts, methodologies, and scope. Furthermore, there have emerged many branches of anthropology, such as cultural, social, and physical anthropology. Each one of them concentrates on different typical characteristics of societies.<sup>71</sup>

Kroeber asserts that this is the reason for the special development of those subdivisions of anthropology known as archaeology, "the science of what is old" in the career of humanity, and ethnology, "the science of peoples" and their cultures, and life histories as groups, irrespective of their degree of advancement.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, when Kroeber analyzed these developments he found the reason behind this in the desire to arrive at a better understanding of all civilizations, irrespective of time and place, in the abstract, or as generalized principles, if possible.<sup>73</sup>

In the same context, Huntington and Brinton mention the developing idea of civilization by early anthropologists as being the opposite of the concept of "barbarism", and the bias inherited in the term. Civilized society differed from primitive society because it was settled, urban, and literate. The concept of "civilization" provided a standard by which to judge societies.

Although there have been some developments in the concept which have been applied in different ways, anthropologists have preserved the classic definition of culture given by Tylor. Therefore, the anthropological approach to civilization is included in the study of culture.

In other words, civilization, in the anthropological tradition, is the highest state of culture, or a degree of advanced culture.<sup>74</sup> It is also the broadest cultural identity.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, anthropologists in general, have approached civilization from the perspective of culture.

#### (b) *The Approach of Sociology*

Sociologists approach history from different angles, some by analyzing the origins, institutions, and functions of groups, and some attach



special importance to population factors as the criteria for judging the evolution of a given society. Others analyze societies in terms of the division of labor within them (Dürkheim), or in terms of the relationships between various forces such as the spirit of Protestantism and the ethics of early modern capitalism (Weber)—or the irresistible economic forces that govern humans and determine trends in history (Marx).

Some eschew any single "theory of history". They attribute importance to the effects of the environment on social organizations and institutions, the powerful roles played not only by economic, but also by political and religious factors, and the impact exerted upon events by various outstanding personalities occupying key positions in history.

There are many sub-fields of sociology that address the study of socio-historical phenomena. Among those sub-fields are historical sociology, macrosociology, and the sociology of change.

#### (1b) *The approach of historical sociology*

It is useful to draw a distinction between two types of historical sociology. The first may be simply called the "sociology of the past". In this kind of research, the historical sociologist uses sociological concepts and theories to investigate groups of people living in a specific society during a specific period in the past. It does not differ fundamentally from research into groups living in the present; it is, simply, that documents form a larger part of the evidence than they would generally do in research into groups living in the present.<sup>76</sup>

The instances of the "sociology of the past" can be categorized into micro and macro levels. Norbert Elias's *The Court Society* (1983) is the best example of the sociology of the past of its micro level because it deals with a relatively closely defined place and period (France and its royal court in the century before the French revolution). For the macro level, Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1976) is the clearest instance.

What distinguishes the sociology of the past from the sociology of the longer-term developmental processes is that the former does not set out primarily to build developmental models of the structured processes of change.

The best example of the latter type is also Norbert Elias in *The Civilizing Process* (1994). He advances a theory of state formation based on the study of Western Europe during the last millennium. He links the formation of Western Europe to the changes in the psychological makeup undergone by individuals over time, as they become gradually more subject to the social constraints imposed by the monopolization of the means of violence by the state apparatus.<sup>77</sup>

Historical sociology, which focuses upon history while examining the social aspects of historical events, facts or institutions, has contributed to the study of civilization from the sociological point of view.

#### (2b) *The approach of macrosociology*

Traditionally, sociology, as defined by its proponents, is a social science concerned with the systematic study of human society. Therefore, much of the work of sociologists is devoted to the study of one or another of the many different component parts of societies (e.g., individuals, families, communities, and classes) and to specific features and problems (e.g., crime, race relations, religion, politics). However, sociologists are involved in more than these topics. They also focus on human societies themselves.<sup>78</sup>

The study of these components and features of societies is sometimes called microsociology, while the study of societies themselves is macrosociology.<sup>79</sup> For the latter Borgatta & Borgatta assert that:

The term macro denotes large; thus, macrosociology refers to the study of large scale phenomena. This covers a broad range of topics that includes groups and collectives of varying sizes, the major organizations and institutions of one or more societies, cross-sectional or historical studies of a single society, and both comparative and historical analysis of multiple societies. At the grandest level, it may cover all human society and history.<sup>80</sup>

Although macrosociology is also concerned with individuals, families, classes, social problems, and all of the other parts and features of societies, it analyzes them in relation to the larger social systems—the societies of which they are part.<sup>81</sup> In this context, theories such as

Marxism, functionalism, and the systems theory are considered as macrosociological.<sup>82</sup>

In other words, macrosociology is a level of sociological analysis concerned with the analysis of whole societies, social structures at large, the global and historical processes of social life and social systems.<sup>83</sup> It uses, as its units of analysis, structural-level units or cases that are larger than observations of individual action and interaction.<sup>84</sup> In this context, civilization, as a large-scale phenomenon and historical and evolutionary long-term structured process of development, belongs to macrosociology, with its approach to the study of human societies over an extended period of time in order to understand the critical process of societal change and development.<sup>85</sup>

Macrosociologists include history in their subject matter. Like historians and philosophers of history, they consider that the broader the span of time they consider, the better they can understand the most basic processes of change in human life. That is why there is a "revival of interest" in macrosociology, as Nolan and Lenski have asserted. They see many reasons for this revival.

First, there is a growing recognition that the most pressing problems of our time (e.g., war, the distress of developing and underdeveloped nations, the problem of poverty, and environmental degradation) are all macrosociological problems that require macrosociological theory and research if solutions are to be found.

Second, there is a growing recognition that many microsociological problems and developments (e.g., the changing role of women, the changing nature of the family, the growing incidence of crime) cannot be understood adequately, or dealt with effectively, unless they are viewed within the context of broader societal trends.<sup>86</sup>

In this context, macrosociology, with its focus on units of analysis, has contributed to the study of the large-scale phenomena. It has contributed sociologically by analyzing the long-term processes, cultural systems, societies and civilization as a whole.<sup>87</sup>

### (3b) *The approach of sociology of change*

Social change, as Lauer asserts, is an inclusive concept that refers to alterations in social phenomena at various levels of human life from

the individual to the global. According to Lauer, social change at the civilizational level is similar to social change at the cultural, societal, communal, institutional, organizational, interactional, and individual levels.<sup>88</sup>

The change at the level of civilization is socio-historical because it is social as well as taking place over an extended period of time, and it is socio-cultural because civilization, according to many scholars, is a social as well as a cultural phenomenon.<sup>89</sup> The civilizational phenomenon takes in consideration society, culture and history.

Therefore, many approaches within Sociology of Change have risen to tackle the issue of change, and they differ according to the aspect of civilization to be studied.

Although there is agreement about the hypothesis that social change follows a privileged, even exclusive pattern, sociologists have produced a wide range of theories about the force behind its initiation and continuity.<sup>90</sup> But generally, as mentioned by Lauer, Sociology of Change is concerned with the explanation of social change by means of answering pivotal questions related to change, such as what causes change? What is the pattern of change? Why does change occur in the particular direction we observe, rather than in some other equally reasonable, alternative way?<sup>91</sup>

Finally, sociology of change has contributed to the study of civilization and historical change through its categorization of the various levels of change based on one variable: the size (family, society, culture, civilization, globe) or the period (historical, long-term, short-term) or its aspect (cultural, intellectual, and civilizational). It also categorizes change based on the combination of two variables: socio-historical, and socio-cultural change.

In this regard, the sociology of change makes a distinctive contribution to the study of civilizational change, although its study of a phenomenon like civilization is one sided. This is due to its adherence to the traditional outlook (paradigm) of sociology that avoids the theoretical and philosophical questions that may arise.

Summing up the discussion of the approaches to civilization within the paradigm of the social sciences, it is important to mention that this paradigm, in its attempt to perform the empirical study of social



phenomena, established its legacy by avoiding the more theoretical and philosophical questions that arise.

Avoiding the speculations of philosophy, the approach of the social sciences cannot explain some questions that go beyond the positivistic, empirical, and physical factors. In fact, they lack the aperture that theoretical research may provide for the study of such complex phenomena as civilization, and suffer the drawback of having a one-sided perspective.

#### CONCLUSION:

#### THE NEED FOR AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO CIVILIZATION

The foregoing discussion of the different concepts of and the various approaches to civilization has led to certain questions about what approach should be adopted to study civilization if all are partial and not able to comprehensively study it.

The available literature has raised a methodological need for what could be called an interdisciplinary approach to the study of civilization. The latter, in turn, leads to another methodological need to systematically examine its complexity and the arguments for an interdisciplinary approach.

##### (1) The Complexity of the Phenomenon of Civilization

The various concepts of "civilization" could assist in considering its multi-faceted character and in mentioning the inadequacy of the approaches to tackle the issue at hand.

The discussion shows that the term civilization covers a vast idea, and that it is an interdisciplinary subject.<sup>92</sup> In addition, the complexity of civilization as a socio-cultural as well as a socio-historical phenomenon entails the need for an approach that takes into consideration its complexity from one side, and considers its multi-variability from the other. Lastly, the study of civilization is the business and the subject matter of many sciences, each of which approaches it from a different perspective in respect to its scope, methodology, concepts, and objectives or field of study.

None of the approaches discussed are able to provide a comprehensive study of civilization, either inclusively or beneficially. We have a phenomenon of many variables on which each of the mentioned sciences focuses on one or two variables, and assumes that it can go ahead by treating the other variables as if they were constants.<sup>93</sup>

Therefore, there is a need to use either "*ʿIlm al-ʿUmrān*," the term "science of civilization" given by Ibn Khaldūn to the study of human organization and civilization,<sup>94</sup> or the "interdisciplinary approach."<sup>95</sup> The latter term has proven to be the most popular among scientists and scholars, especially since an interdisciplinary approach to theory, culture, and society was born out of the works of several 20<sup>th</sup> century writers like Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Hebermas, Norbert Elias, Antony Giddens, Michael Mann, Roland Robertson, and Benjamin Nelson.<sup>96</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn's term *ʿIlm al-ʿUmrān* has yet to be appreciated, recognized, and used by researchers. Although many studies have asserted that he was a pioneer in using the term and the science in studying the issues of civilization, history, sociology, and culture that emerged as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>97</sup>

In this context, Ritzer questions why researchers do not use Ibn Khaldūn's term, and he sees that the answer lies in the fact that his work did not lead to the development of the field of sociology in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Middle East. His work and ideas were lost to the Christianized west but not to the Muslim world, and are only now being rediscovered by western scholars interested in the early sources of sociology.<sup>98</sup>

##### (2) The Arguments for an Interdisciplinary Approach

Many thinkers and scholars have shown a concern over an interdisciplinary approach. They acknowledge the failure of the existing approaches to study civilization because of their limitations and their single-sided perspectives and call for an approach which is more appropriate for its study.

Sorokin for example questioned the feasibility of the perspective and the approach of the philosophers of history in studying civilizations

from their long-term socio-historical changes. From his sociological perspective, he did not acknowledge the possibility of the internal links of such huge and vast geographical and historical units such as civilization as conceptualized by Toynbee, Spengler and other philosophers of history.<sup>99</sup>

Therefore, he put civilizations on the category of systems and "congeries," thus doubting the presence of "one unified whole, living and changing in togetherness" which is necessary to be considered as units to be studied from the sociological point of view.<sup>100</sup>

Moreover, he questioned the lack of methodological tools to study comprehensively the socio-cultural phenomena because the causes of change go beyond the phenomena themselves.<sup>101</sup>

The diversity in the approaches is also mentioned by many writers. Burns<sup>102</sup> saw that the complexity of the phenomenon of civilization led some researchers to focus on its long-term development, while others focused on its economic aspect. Others emphasized the social or geographic expansion. Therefore, many approaches and theories have been formed to study each aspect without giving a comprehensive understanding of all its parts.

Braudel was one of the prominent thinkers and historians who expressed his criticism of the available approaches to civilization. In *A History of Civilizations*, he stressed that to define the idea of civilization requires the combined efforts of all the social sciences. They include history, geography, sociology, economics and all collective psychology.<sup>103</sup>

Others mentioned the methodological problems involved in the study of civilization among the social sciences. Edwards asserts that there is a fundamental theoretical dispute over the restriction of the social sciences to the short span of time and the avoidance of the history of the phenomena. That is to say, the isolation of the "complex whole" at a particular point in time is only partially possible.<sup>104</sup>

The failure of various approaches to manage the study of civilization comprehensively may lead to the conclusion that civilization, with its many aspects, cannot be adequately studied at the various levels in an isolated manner. Instead, it needs to be conceptualized in terms of a global perspective.

Therefore, the debate continues as to which approach is more comprehensive to study civilization. The argument of this chapter stresses that much of the literature on civilization is confusing because not all who use the term distinguish it clearly enough from other phenomena, and some writers even appear to use it interchangeably with other socio-historical and socio-cultural phenomena.



## The Major Concepts of Bennabi's Approach to Civilization

This chapter discusses the starting point of Bennabi's approach in order to understand the general line of his ideas, his concept and the elements of civilization, which include the equation of civilization and the three ingredients, the concept of the three realms, and the concept of the network of social relations.

### THE STARTING POINT OF BENNABI'S APPROACH

In the 1930s, Bennabi realized that the crisis of the Muslim world could not be diagnosed by means of a superficial analysis. Thus, while he acknowledged their efforts he also criticized the two trends in the modern Muslim world, the reformist and modernist, for not determining the real causes of the crisis and for not going beyond its symptoms. In those efforts, according to Bennabi, "there was no methodological analysis of the crisis, a diagnostic and pathological study of the Muslim society."<sup>1</sup> He also criticized those who put the blame on external factors but ignored internal ones.<sup>2</sup>

He asserts that the efforts to bring about a renaissance in the Muslim world did not develop a systematic approach to the crisis in order to provide solutions for the Muslim society. In this regard, he undertook a critical review of the various trends and ideas in the modern Muslim world, not only to understand what was at fault, but also to develop his own ideas and suggestions for regeneration.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, he criticized those who related the crisis to the lack of means and instruments. The problem was rooted in the Muslim culture of the post-*al-Muwahhid* era. It was in their minds, souls, and behavior. That is why Bennabi said, "The matter is not a matter of means and instruments. Rather, it is matter of methods and ideas."<sup>4</sup>

To understand and tackle the crisis which did not start with the colonial era, Bennabi was of the opinion that it is important to take into consideration the historical process of that crisis that paved the way for the spirit of colonizability.<sup>5</sup>

Colonization is not the main reason for the present situation in the Muslim world, but it is one of the many secondary factors. The primary factor is colonizability, that is, our vulnerability to be colonized.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the present state of the Muslim world requires a deeper analysis which goes beyond partial appearances and symptoms and undertakes a systematic examination of the historical process of backwardness in order to find its starting point and its pivotal factors. It needs to examine the status of humans and their culture so much so that any change that does not take this factor in consideration will not be important.

According to Bennabi, it is an issue of a comprehensive theory for the renaissance in the Muslim world. Therefore, he set out to discover the roots of the crisis and proposed a systematic orientation towards the efforts and activities of that movement, which should be based on the diagnosis of the different stages of the Muslim society throughout history.<sup>7</sup>

The next step was to look for a central theme or unit that could be used to tackle the various manifestations of the crisis.

The central unit, which includes all other partial diagnoses, was absent in the efforts of the renaissance because the movement lacks methodological and scientific thinking.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the Muslim world is suffering from various crises which Bennabi summed up in one expression: "civilizational crisis."<sup>9</sup>

The problem of every people, in its essence, is that of its civilization. And it is not possible for any people to comprehend and resolve its problem if it does not elevate its thought and capacities to the level of

the great human events and speculate deeply in order to understand the factors which construct and deconstruct civilizations.<sup>10</sup>

The political, economic, social and educational crises in the Muslim society are mere manifestations of the civilizational crisis which is the real and core crisis. Accordingly, any solution given to alleviate those symptoms will not change the situation of the Muslim and their society. On the contrary, it will exacerbate it, and create an even worse situation.<sup>11</sup> The previous paragraph quoted from *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah* [The Conditions of Renaissance] also suggests a central unit that integrates the critical aspects of the present state of Muslim civilization. This unit is "civilization," or as Toynbee called it "the intelligible unit of analysis."<sup>12</sup>

The study needs an integrated approach which facilitates a comprehensive understanding of such a phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> Bennabi called for the use of an interdisciplinary approach which derives its general rules from various sciences such as history, sociology, psychology and metaphysics.<sup>14</sup> Scholars of Bennabi also emphasize and agree on Bennabi's field of research and approach. They consider that the study of civilization is his internal field of study and focal concern. They also agree that he presents a different approach with respect to his terms, definitions, concepts, the units of analysis, the scope of the analysis and the perspective he adopted.<sup>15</sup>

Every scholar with a new message to convey introduces his or her own terms, concepts, and definitions, and Bennabi is no exception. Although he borrows from various paradigms, schools of thought, approaches, and thinkers, he was novel and original in his synthesis of various ideas, and in putting forth a new system of tackling the issues of civilization.<sup>16</sup>

## BENNABI'S CONCEPT OF CIVILIZATION

### (1) Definition of Civilization

Bennabi's definitions of civilization are many, they come from different perspectives, and are a multidimensional phenomenon. Therefore, in order to ascertain Bennabi's understanding of the meaning of civilization, the author classified the definitions into six categories:

Civilization can be defined as being the sum total of the moral as well as material conditions which allow a given society to provide each one of its members with all the social guarantees necessary for his development.<sup>17</sup>

The term civilization is used to indicate the balance between the moral and the material aspects in human life. Bennabi did not determine civilization by moral and spiritual conditions alone, or by material conditions alone, as generally defined by anthropologists. Rather, he was aware of the importance of the sum total of all conditions.

Civilization is a "self-force that refines the primitive features within the individual and societal context."<sup>18</sup> It is but "the ability to carry out a specific mission and accomplish a distinct function."<sup>19</sup> It is a kind of psychological and mental force that organizes human capacity and human vital energy to respond to the needs of development and progress. Civilization becomes a self-character and a self-potency that helps humans control behaviors and energy, and directs it towards the benefit of society.

Bennabi was of the view that civilization is in its essence, an idea and a project for systematic work. It activates social capacities in order to face the crucial problems of a society.<sup>20</sup> In other words, civilization is:

[the] result of a living dynamic idea, which mobilizes a pre-civilized society to enter history and construct a system of ideas according to its archetypes. So the society thereafter, develops an authentic cultural milieu, which in return, controls all the characteristics which distinguish that society from other cultures and civilizations.<sup>21</sup>

Bennabi defines civilization essentially as:

The total result of the moral and material conditions which grant a given society the possibility to offer each one of its members, in every stage of his existence from childhood till afterlife, with necessary social assistance requested for his growth in this stage or in the other.<sup>22</sup>



Bennabi denotes that civilization is a social force that plays an important role in the development of the individual and society as well. It is a sum total of the moral and material conditions. The individual does not provide those aspects himself; society offers them, generates civilization, and helps the individual to play his role in history as a civilizational force. Bennabi gives precedence to society over the human, in his definition. For him, humans as individuals cannot construct a civilization, but it is the society or the group that can initiate the civilizing process and take the first step toward its historical progress. Society gives the real meaning for human activities in the realm of history. It constitutes the progressive milieu that helps the individual to carry out his responsibilities in the form of a mission and a function.

Consequently, in Bennabi's conception, society is the core force in any civilizing process. It allows the individual to possess the guarantees he needs in his progress and development. The individual is just as important, and contributes to the development of his society as an integrated member in the social movement.

His role depends on the level of sociability and societal interaction that limits his position and role in the entire movement of human development. The latter is the role of civilization from the functional perspective. It builds a dialectic relationship between society and the individual, and links the integrated individual to its society as part of one single unit that undergoes the civilizing process towards a state of stability, growth, and prosperity.

Bennabi asserts that moral and material factors are crucial in creating balance and liveliness in human society on the one hand, and generating solidarity and unity among the members of society, on the other. The sum total of moral and material conditions provides the social services for the members of society. That is why Bennabi does not concentrate only on the products and objects of a civilization, but on the moral aspects that come first in the civilizing values. Therefore, if civilization does not provide these two kinds of assistance, particularly the moral one, it will not be able to create the civilizing milieu.

Bennabi defines civilization, this time, by focusing on the structure and the social essence of civilization. Thus, civilization means that:

the human being learns how to live within a group and perceives at the same time the essential importance of the network of social relations in organizing human life in order to perform its historical function and responsibilities.<sup>23</sup>

This definition reflects the importance of the network of social relations among the members of society. Civilization helps to formulate the network of social relations that makes social interaction and education among the members of society possible and beneficial.

Bennabi gives another definition which emphasizes the socio-intellectual dimension of civilization:

...the product of a substantial idea that inspires a pre-civilized society the vital drive that penetrates it onto the historical movement. Thus, the society constructs its intellectual system in conformity with the original pattern of its civilization. It is rooted in an original cultural ambiance which will decide all its characteristics vis-à-vis other cultures and civilizations.<sup>24</sup>

Ideas are the significant social force that gives the society its intellectual characteristics, cultural originality, and social vitality. Indeed, ideas are the prime force that drives society to enter into history in order to accomplish its mission and to carry out its responsibilities in a given historical moment.

Bennabi's different approaches formulate his unique concept of civilization as the intelligible unit with which to study the problem of the backwardness in the Muslim world.

From these various definitions the integrative approach stands out. Civilization seems to be like a multidimensional concept that enables us to reconcile its integral parts in order to constitute its entire dynamic structure. The latter led Bennabi to call for and apply an interdisciplinary approach to study the complex phenomenon of civilization. In the next section, a discussion of Bennabi's interdisciplinary approach may help in the more systematic understanding of his concept of civilization.

## (2) The Interdisciplinary Approach to Civilization

Bennabi drew attention to the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to study civilization. The definitions presented previously suggest an integrative way to do it objectively. Many disciplines are required to analyze civilization as a social phenomenon, and Bennabi was aware of its multidimensionality. For that reason, he examined it from different angles, using various sciences, and taking into consideration the integrative character of the dimensions of civilization as one set.

Bennabi asserted that civilization is a social phenomenon not a physical one. Therefore, when studying it and its historical movement, one should be aware of the complexity of social phenomena which is difficult in nature because of certain weaknesses in the methods of social analysis. He says "unlike the natural sciences, human sciences have not yet achieved such a level of maturity as to provide universally applicable definitions for their concepts and terms."<sup>25</sup> The result is that "the rule in sociology is not like that in precise science, a strict limit between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, but it is just general guidance by which we can avoid the outrageous mistakes."<sup>26</sup>

In other words, dealing with the social phenomena is more complicated than dealing with mathematics or natural phenomena. This is because there is an original difference in their nature and field. Approaching civilization as a social phenomenon requires a correct understanding of its nature and scope.

For instance, social scientists face certain difficulties in determining the moment of birth of one civilization and the decline of another. They cannot explain precisely the direct and indirect reasons for the development of any civilization. In fact, Bennabi asserts that the methods for studying it are unable to draw "precise limit between civilization that is being composed, and civilization have already composed"<sup>27</sup>

Bennabi "as an engineer, was trained to utilize various scientific avenues of research, such as observation, hypothesis, development, and analysis."<sup>28</sup> He was aware of the nature of the social phenomenon and its demands, and he stressed that this method should be comprehensive to deal with civilization in its whole structure, rather than

fragmenting the analysis and limiting it to certain parts, and undermining others. The method should be complete and impartial. It should attempt to discover the problem, and study its origin, history, and reason.<sup>29</sup>

Bennabi does not rely only on what is given by historians of civilization whose works are concerned with gathering and interpreting historical events; he stresses the psychosocial analysis provided by both psychology and social science.<sup>30</sup>

These two sciences are very important in Bennabi's approach. He benefits from the tools they provide, and he argues that if civilization is a social phenomenon, logically it is concerned with humans and society as well.

Hence, he will study the problem of civilization by using the information provided by history while taking into account the measures of psychoanalysis.

Bennabi holds the view that he should approach the phenomenon of civilization not as a series of events narrated by history, but as a phenomenon whose analysis guides us to its essence, or perhaps leads us to the pattern of God that governs it. This approach can enable us to study this phenomenon,<sup>31</sup> and it demands the integration of the general rules derived from history, sociology, and psychology.<sup>32</sup>

He noted that he would apply the method used in dealing with complicated objects;<sup>33</sup> and tried to integrate the tools into one single system of analysis.

Bennabi holds the same view about religion as some other historians and philosophers of history, especially Ibn Khaldūn and Toynbee. He recognizes the significance of religion and insists on its because revelation becomes a crucial element. We cannot focus only on data and facts given by the social and human sciences, but we must necessarily use accurate data provided by religion, as it refers to the divine sources of knowledge.

His approach implements the four sciences (history, psychology, sociology, and metaphysics) but it is based on the role of religion, or the religious idea as he calls it, in generating a civilizing process in any human society.<sup>34</sup> Bennabi examines how religion affects humans and society, directing and enabling them to play their roles in history.



The study of civilization should not only focus on the objects as they are in reality, but also comprehend them in their purpose.<sup>35</sup> In his discussion of the importance of the four sciences, Bennabi explained his views as follows:

One could consider the historical phenomenon from various points of view: from the point of view of the individual, it is above all a psychology, that is, a study of man regarded as a psycho-temporal factor of a civilization. However, this civilization is the manifestation of a life and collective thought. From this point of view, history is sociology, that is, the study of the conditions of development of a social group, defined not as much by its ethical or political factors as by the complex of ethical, aesthetic and technical affinities corresponding to the air, or space of a civilization. On the other hand, this social group is not isolated, and its evolution is conditioned by certain connections with the human ensemble. From this point of view, history is metaphysics, since its perspective, extending beyond the domain of historical causality, embraces the phenomena in their finality.<sup>36</sup>

The four elements are integrated into a single system, and the complexity of the phenomenon of civilization calls for the implementation of different angles and perspectives, a collaborative approach which provides a comprehensive diagnosis and understanding.

It is clear that the study of civilization and its course in history cannot be satisfactorily tackled through the traditionally known approaches in an isolated manner. It can only be done by applying a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach which will not be comprehended without a discussion on how Bennabi structurally analyzed the elements of civilization in his famous "equation of civilization."

#### THE ELEMENTS OF CIVILIZATION

##### (1) The Equation of Civilization

For Bennabi, the formula "Civilization = Man + Soil + Time" represents the equation of civilization which structurally determines its

elements or ingredients. It gives us the very basic elements of any civilizational action or product:

Civilization = Man + Soil + Time, indicates that the problem of civilization can be analyzed into three primary problems: the problem of man, the problem of soil, and the problem of time. Thus, resolving the problem or the question of civilization could not be done by gathering and stocking its products, but by fundamentally resolving its three problems.<sup>37</sup>

Structurally speaking, three elements produce the product of civilization: man, matter (soil), and time. While man is the generator and the transformer of the raw material to achieve a certain objective, matter, is the primary source, and time is the necessary period to achieve the objective of producing that product. For example, if we analyze the manufacture of radio, TV, or car from a structural point of view, man, soil (matter), and time are involved.

Bennabi realized that all objects or things which humans produce are the result of three elements: man (*Insān*), soil (*Turāb*), and time (*Waq̄t*),<sup>38</sup> and argues that if we analyze all the products of civilization, the result is the following equation: All products of such a civilization = all men involved + all sorts of soil (matter) + all managed periods of time. The three elements are always found in any society, and form the fundamentals that enable any society to begin a civilizing process.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, all the ingredients in the mentioned equation are, in a sense, raw materials or original sources that every human society possesses. A positive interaction of these preliminary elements generates a civilizing process that can assist society to develop. However, any problem civilization faces, cannot be resolved if we are not able to understand the elements that form the equation of civilization. That is, "civilization = man + soil + time".

The application of the same analysis to every product of civilization leads to the discovery that the same elements are involved in the process of their production. They are the result of man as a maker of all social events and a promoter of himself as a social being. Man also promotes the soil. The latter formulates the physical world in which all

objects are framed and shaped. The soil constitutes one of the essential components in every object, and these two components, man and soil, interact in a span of time. The more the span of time is organized and planned, the more the interaction produces an oriented civilizing process throughout the course of history.<sup>40</sup>

In Bennabi's view, when we plan for a civilization, it is not our obligation to think of its products and objects. Rather, we should think of three things; man, soil, and time. When we scientifically tackle these three issues, constructing human personality, exploiting the soil and organizing time, only then will civilization provide the necessary social services and assistance humans need for development.<sup>41</sup>

According to Bennabi's approach, the three elements of man, soil and time are the primary sources for any society at its point of departure to build a new civilization. "In these three elements the social wealth of any society is located and these are the factors which drive it into history."<sup>42</sup> When society begins its first steps in history, it does not enjoy many things and ideas, but the civilizational movement that consists of man, soil and time will enable its people to construct what Bennabi calls the world of things and objects.

The three elements are the original values that Allah has provided for any people as social wealth. He considers, that "as long as the three core values: man, soil and time (in the time of hardship) are in the hands of the people ... the people, no doubt, hold the key of their fate."<sup>43</sup> Bennabi was aware of another element necessary for the dynamic positive or negative interaction of those three elements to formulate civilizing or decivilizing processes.

Based on historical analysis of world civilizations, in general, and Muslim civilization, in particular, he realized that all civilizations flourished under the warm shadow of the religious idea, whatever that may be. Therefore, he added to his equation of civilization the element of religion that plays the role of "catalyst of civilization."<sup>44</sup>

The following section will analyze the first essential ingredient, man, his importance and status, and the role of religion in the equation of civilization.

## (2) Man (*Insān*), the Primary Device of Civilization

According to Bennabi, among the three structural elements of civilization man is the primary device of society; hence, he is the central force in any civilizing process and without him the other two ingredients are of no value. Man is the driving force behind development and progress or backwardness and decline. Bennabi considered it important to mention the dialectic relationship between man and civilization, "man is the fundamental condition of all civilizations and civilization constantly fixes the human condition."<sup>45</sup>

He argues that man is the one who, in the final analysis, determines the social value of the civilizational equation. Although he does not undermine the value of soil and time, they cannot achieve any social or civilizational transformation if we rely on them only.<sup>46</sup>

He assumes also that man has been created in his natural form by Allah. However, human conditions and social surroundings influence him deeply, and drive him to flourish or decline, which means that man is the outcome of socio-historical factors.

Man is a social being. Historically, people interact with time and space not as natural creatures but as social beings, so their attitude towards life has been shaped by their continuous experience facing the different challenges of life.<sup>47</sup> Man is that complex being who builds and at the same time is the product of that civilization.

Bennabi criticized the reformist movement in the Muslim world for its attempt to reform the milieu rather than the human factor itself,<sup>48</sup> and argues that we must reform man as a primary condition to reforming his milieu. Thus, as his framework for analyzing man's status, he uses the verse "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."<sup>49</sup>

Following is a discussion on Bennabi's concept of integrated man versus disintegrated man, and his idea of orientation which is the mechanism for transforming man into a dynamic device of civilization.

### (2.1) The Difference Between Integrated and Disintegrated Man

It is obvious that civilization does not start its civilizing process wherever or whenever people meet and assemble in a given place or time.



Rather it starts with a man who is prepared to perform his civilizational responsibilities and who is ready to embark on a civilizing process. Bennabi differentiates between two qualities of men: integrated and disintegrated. While civilization starts its civilizing process with the first type of man, it starts its decline with the second.

Bennabi states that "history commences with the integrated man, constantly adapting his effort to his ideal and needs, and accomplishing in society his double mission of actor and witness."<sup>50</sup> In other words, civilization rises with the integrated type of man who is able to transform his characteristics into his ideals in order to undertake his role in his society.

By the same token, "history ends with the disintegrated man, the corpuscle deprived of the centre of gravitation, the individual living in a dissolved society that no longer furnishes his existence with either moral or material base."<sup>51</sup>

The two types of man correspond to two different phases of civilization. While the integrated man starts the civilizing process, the disintegrated man witnesses the phase of decline where he no longer undertakes any civilizing action; he has lost all ambition to get involved in any social movement.

To distinguish between integrated and disintegrated man, Bennabi also introduces the raw and the conditioned man: What he meant by it is that while the first is the product of nature in an unrefined and elementary state, the second is formulated by society. It is the function of society that shapes him according to its specific objectives and orientation. In the raw state, the human being is acquainted with natural faculties, while in the formulated state with social features. The first one is available in any human being, in his biological structure, and it is represented by his innate ability to use his intelligence, soil, and time, while the second value is represented in the means and experiences the individual finds in his social milieu in order to promote his personality and develop and refine his capacities. Thus, the role of society is but this development and refinement.<sup>52</sup> Bennabi asserts that:

...since we have already stressed the fact that human society is not a mere aggregate of individuals, it should be more precisely stated that

the basic unit of a society is not the raw individual; rather it is the conditioned individual.<sup>53</sup>

This notion of adaptation or conditioning is clearly expressed by the Prophet in the following hadith:<sup>54</sup> "Every child is born in *fitrah* (natural disposition) and it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian."<sup>55</sup>

Man demands certain transformation from his raw form into the conditioned man who is a type of integrated man. Qualifying man to play his role in history requires such a transformation in his personality and social surroundings. Bennabi stresses the role of the transformed (adapted or conditioned) man in history, and believes that the real process of civilization should formulate this man. The problem of any civilization is substantially related to human agency. Thus, any thinking on the problem of man is thinking on the problem of civilization.<sup>56</sup>

Man is also a vital social force. Bennabi contends that:

...man is involved in social life as a psycho-temporal factor. He acts not only in terms of temporality, of his material needs, but also in terms of his psyche, of his spirituality, and therein lies the complete reality of man which must be taken into account for seizing it in its totality.<sup>57</sup>

This is the complete picture Bennabi draws for the man of civilization (the integrated man). When Bennabi dealt with the problem of civilization in the Muslim world, he directed our attention to this kind of man. Our crucial need, he explains, is in the realm of persons more than the realm of things... our primary need is the new man...the civilized man... the man who comes back again to a history which our civilization has left for a long time.<sup>58</sup> How to promote such an integrated man? Through the process of transforming him from his raw state into the conditioned state which enables him to be integrated and ready to play his role in the civilizing process.

## (2.2) The Idea of Orientation

The concept of orientation (*tawjih*), according to Bennabi, refers to harmony in the movement of a civilization, unity in the objectives, and

avoidance of conflict between efforts starting from the same sources and aiming at similar objectives. It provides strength in the foundations, harmony in the process, and unity in the objectives. It is a mechanism to prevent waste of effort and time. There are millions of working people and thinking minds available for use at any time, but they need to be put in an appropriate system which provides the right place for each member.<sup>59</sup> In essence, orientation means planning and organizing our capacities.<sup>60</sup>

The problem of civilization in the Muslim world is not on the level of means or things, but a problem of direction of those means and things. It is also not a problem of institutions, but of man and on how to enable him to undertake a dynamic and creative interaction with time and soil. Bennabi clearly defined the core problem of Muslim civilization. Thus, he explains what is to be directed. He says:

It is necessary to face the problem (of civilization) as a whole, and to take into consideration especially its principal element, i.e., man. So, to understand how man can contribute to synthesize history...the individual influences society first through his thought, then through his labour, and finally, through his wealth. Therefore, the issue of orienting man depends on orienting him in three aspects: culture, labour, and capital (wealth).<sup>61</sup>

Planning is a driving-force essential to orientation. Consequently, it will have an impact on the socio-psychological situation of both man and society throughout the pre-definition of objectives and in determining practical methods and programs to achieve them.<sup>62</sup>

#### *Orientation at the Level of Man*

Orientation at this level means taking into consideration abilities that man or woman can contribute within society, and plan to direct his/her intellectual faculties, labor, and wealth to achieve his/her objectives. For Bennabi, this is the level of culture, inasmuch as culture is the milieu which provides man with orientation. He views culture as the primary factor that influences man as a social personality, and society as a collective body.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, he considers culture the focal point in the orientation of the human mind and life as well. Unlike other scholars mentioned in this chapter, Bennabi gave his own concept of culture and its relationship with civilization. Although this point will be discussed extensively in Chapter Seven when we analyze the external-intellectual dimension of metatheorizing in the context of Bennabi's approach, this is what he means by culture. He considers culture the intellectual, social, and psychological milieu that encompasses the existence of man in society<sup>64</sup> in which the individual shapes his characteristics and personality; as the milieu that reflects a special civilization, and within its limits the man of that civilization can be occupied with his activities.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the mode of culture, according to him, determines the direction of civilization and its destiny in history.

#### *Orientation at the Level of Labor*

Orientation at this level, according to Bennabi's approach, means organizing social work in one direction. It is an attempt to synthesize all social activities and work in order to change the condition of man, and create a new atmosphere for progress. From this new atmosphere, the concept of labor generates its social meaning.<sup>66</sup>

Because spontaneous labor does not produce appropriate and constant results, we should think in terms of an organized and planned labor that provides suitable work and a place for every member of society that could direct energy in the civilizing process.

Bennabi asserts that teamwork, or social labor, is primarily a school that enables man to face any peculiar circumstances, such as backwardness for instance, because it teaches him that the "civilizational will" enables man to discover "civilizational power" and ability.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, collective labor demands a systematic plan that orients individual activities and drives them toward a civilizing process.

#### *Orientation at the Level of Wealth*

Orientation of wealth does not only mean its accumulation, but also its mobilization and activation; at this level it means to make every financial portion active and movable from one place to another to create work opportunities and activity.<sup>68</sup> Bennabi asserts that we have to



transfer its social meaning from a state of stagnation to active capital that is able to renovate thought, work, and life in society,<sup>69</sup> and while he tried to be open to all the trends of thought in his time, he clarifies the difference between his concept and those of Marxists and of Capitalists.

In fact, taking into consideration the dominant trends of thought regarding the concept of wealth and capital, he tried to make a synthesis and came up with his own ideas: orientation on wealth could activate it, distribute it among different agents of society, and could give the individual a crucial role to play in society, and vice-versa.

Summing up the three levels of orientation, Bennabi concluded that they together provide the elementary conditions for the individual to be an integrated man who can start a civilizing process.<sup>70</sup> It also offers the mechanism and process of transforming man from unrefined to the conditioned man who will be able to integrate and play his role as the primary device of civilization.

### (3) Religion and Its Position in the Equation of Civilization

Bennabi's equation of civilization is based on three fundamental elements; man, soil, and time, to which he added another element, religion, just as important but not a structural factor in the equation. Religion is a catalyst, motivator, and provider of the milieu in which the three elements enter into dynamic interaction to form civilization.

#### (3.1) *The Importance of Religion as a Catalyst*

For Bennabi, the "Catalyst of Civilization" is that element that has the power to blend and synthesize the other three elements into dynamic interaction in order to formulate a civilization. As proved by the historical analysis, it is found that this catalyst is really "a religious idea" which always accompanied the construction of civilization through history.<sup>71</sup>

So belief in a religion, accompanies the process of constructing civilization in history.<sup>72</sup> For Bennabi, it is the stimulus that facilitates and activates that interaction, and the rationale behind that claim refers us to history and archaeology. History is the laboratory that confirms this

experiment of synthesizing man, soil, and time to formulate history in light of religious ideas. Bennabi argues that if we study the history of civilizations:

...we will find clearly, that all civilizations have their roots in religious sentiments. For history will tell us that the Buddhist civilization has its roots in Buddhism, the Muslim civilization in Islam and the Western civilization in Christianity.<sup>73</sup>

Religion is a pivotal coefficient in the equation of civilization, without which the three values (elements: man, soil and time) cannot be organized and directed towards their civilizing process.

Those three elements do not work in a separate or isolated form, but within a harmonious synthesis by which civilized society possesses its will and power. Subsequently, the problem of this harmonious synthesis becomes crucial.<sup>74</sup>

The importance of religion in Bennabi's approach is not only related to its essence and divine source, but essentially to its social role as a catalyst of human energies and capacities. As a social thinker, Bennabi was looking for the conditions needed to bring about the renaissance of a new civilization in the Muslim world. Thus, he was looking for ways to reactivate those primary elements of civilization, and to discover how to integrate them. Religion makes a spiritual relationship network that links the souls of society with the faith in God, on the one hand, and brings together the members of society in a horizontal network of relationships, on the other. In other words, Bennabi aimed to provide a paradigm which extends beyond earthly life.<sup>75</sup>

As a Muslim social thinker, Bennabi emphasizes the role of religion in resolving the problems of civilization. He was influenced by the example of the first generation of Islam founded by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, and their practical understanding of Islam. He insists that there is need to show man how to live in relation to Allah, and to believe in Him. He emphasizes that this is the way to make the soul surpass its limitations to achieve a high level of efficiency and brightness.<sup>76</sup>

Returning to his theoretical concept of the role of religion, Bennabi asserts that "The social role of religion is essentially that of a catalyst, favoring the transformation of values that pass from a natural to a psycho-temporal state, corresponding to a certain stage of civilization."<sup>77</sup> First, it turns the biological man into a sociological entity. Second, it turns time – simple chronological duration evaluated in "hours that pass" – into sociological time, evaluated in hours of labor. Third, it turns soil – yielding unilaterally and unconditionally the nourishment for man according to a simple process of consumption – into a technically equipped and conditioned ground for catering for the multiple needs of social life according to the conditions of a process of production. Religion is then the catalyst of social values.<sup>78</sup>

In other words, religion makes three changes: it unites the network of social relations, it motivates common activity, and it changes the psychological attitudes of individuals in society. Talbi sees that in Bennabi's notion, religion enables society to undertake common activity, and changes the behavior of the individual by directing his/her vital powers towards achieving a specific purpose.<sup>79</sup> This psychological change (of individuals and society) is a prerequisite to any social change necessary to bring about the historical and organic construct made up of the three elements of society: man, soil and time.

All civilizations, without exception in history, have flourished in the shadow of religious ideas. However, in Bennabi's approach, religion cannot begin its civilizing function as a catalyst unless it embarks upon a civilizing process that assembles man, soil, and time in one project.

Bennabi considers that history and archaeology can assist in proving the importance of religion in the civilizing process, and help to give a *raison d'être* to his claim. He states:

As far back as we look into the past history of man, either into the most beautiful periods of his civilization or into the most rudimentary stages of his social evolution, we always find there a trace of religious thought. Archaeology has always revealed, among the vestiges, which it brings to light, the remnants of monuments that were consecrated to some cult by the ancients. For the simple dolmen to the most imposing temple,

architecture has evolved on a par with religious thought, which also included the laws and even the science of man. Besides, civilizations were born in the shadow of temples, such as that of Solomon, or that of the Ka'bah. Thus, it was from these places that civilization radiated out to illuminate the world to brighten its universities and laboratories and to enlighten in particular, the political debates in parliaments. The laws of modern nations are essentially canonical. As for their civil laws, there is not least of religious essence in France, particularly where it was borrowed from Muslim law. Customs and habits of peoples are modelled by a metaphysical preoccupation, which sends even the smallest Negro village around a small hut especially and carefully built for the more or less primitive spiritual life of the people.<sup>80</sup>

Every civilization started from a religious drive that pushed society to begin the civilizing process. Religion is naturally inscribed in the origin of all human transformations.<sup>81</sup> In fact, he argues that these contemporary civilizations (Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Muslim ...) formulated the original dynamic synthesis of man, soil, and time in the cradle of a religious idea.<sup>82</sup>

Civilization does not begin without the emergence of a religious idea in its broadest sense. Therefore, in any civilization we have to search for the religious foundations that made it rise. It is not too much to claim that we could find in Buddhism the seeds of Buddhist civilization and in Brahma the seeds of Brahman civilization. Civilization cannot appear in a given society except in the form of revelation (in its broadest sense) which is revealed in order to formulate legislation and a method for people. However, the religious idea does not play its social role in the formation and development of social reality, only if it is sticking to its metaphysical value. That is, if it is only reflecting our view beyond earthly matters.<sup>83</sup>

Alternatively, its foundations stand upon the idea of directing people towards an unseen worshiped in its broadest sense as it is decreed for man that he will not see the illumination of a civilization unless he extends his horizons beyond his earthly life.<sup>84</sup>



(3.2) *Bennabi's Meaning of Religion*

Generally, by religion Bennabi does not mean Islam per se, but includes all religions, quasi-religions and ideologies. Religion, for Bennabi, connotes any kind of relation between a human being and a power of divine or social nature, any idea or ideology that formulates a sort of commitment and relation among the members of a society, and that directs peoples. In other words, Bennabi includes in the broad meaning of religion any long-term social project for constructing a society where the first generation takes the first step, and other generations will continue the project.<sup>85</sup>

However, for Bennabi, there is a difference between religions in their originality and method.

Relying on the Qur'an and the various sciences mentioned previously, Bennabi sees religion as part of the cosmic order. He says: "in the light of Qur'an, religion appears as a cosmic phenomenon, regulating man's thought and civilization as gravity regulates matter and conditions its evolution. It appears also as part of the universal order, as both the original law of the soul and the law of the physical bodies."<sup>86</sup> It is the source of the perspectives which civilization adopts.

Religion is not a mere spiritual and mental activity of the human psyche. Rather, it is both a fundamental disposition of the human species and a part of the cosmic order deeply rooted in the structure of the universe. This means that religion cannot be reduced to a mere moral category acquired by the human species over history, or relative to the primitive stages of human socio-cultural development.

Mesawi observed that Bennabi is not the first to mention this issue, for his ideas merely support the same position held by different philosophers, moralists, theologians and social scientists. The religious phenomenon is inherent in human nature,<sup>87</sup> therefore "Homo Religiosus" is a quality inherent in the nature of human beings.<sup>88</sup>

Bennabi, in a more theoretical vein, claims that every piece of work or action in society is formulated from three categories derived from the elements of civilization. In any work, activity, or action, we find man as worker, the instruments used to perform such an activity or action, and the idea behind that action.

## (4) The Concept of the Three Realms of Society

Bennabi discusses first the origin and then the nature of the three realms.

(4.1) *The Origin of the Three Realms*

The component of any action belongs, in the final analysis, to three categories: objects, persons, and ideas.<sup>89</sup> The activities of a clerk, craftsman, manufacturer, or farmer contain two visible elements: man and the instruments, together with the invisible element of the ideas that motivate man to use such instruments to achieve his specific aims. Therefore, he argues that:

No action can be brought about outside a given scheme that encompasses, simultaneously with the visible elements, an ideological element representing both its motivations and operational patterns which summarize every social and technological progress of a society.<sup>90</sup>

Applying the mechanism of synthesis to these elements leads to the conclusion that all actions, activities, and deeds are the sum of men plus the sum of materials or instruments plus the sum of ideas behind those actions. The synthesis mentioned now is the same as the one regarding the ingredients of civilization. In other words, civilization is the result of the activities of all men plus the presence of all instruments within the frame of a certain ideology or system of ideas (i.e., religious idea). Therefore, the accomplishment of civilization depends on the entirety of the activity resulting from the sum of all the activities done by man, which are composed of men, objects, and ideas.

Civilization represents a high and complicated human act accomplished by a given society. This activity, like any other, owes its existence to the three realms mentioned by Bennabi:

If we seek a more precise expression, we would say that the making of history (civilizational action) comes about as a result of the influence of three social categories i.e., the realm of persons, the realm of ideas, and the realm of objects.<sup>91</sup>

Unlike the previous section which discussed these elements from a structural point of view to see how they are involved in the construction of civilization, Bennabi here emphasizes their social or collective level. Civilization is not the accomplishment of individuals but of society. Therefore, he speaks of realms, not elements, in order to draw attention to the collective action.

Sociologically speaking, when Bennabi evokes these realms he refers to society. Thus, he argues that these realms do not act separately from one another but interact within the framework of a religious idea that provides a system of ideas to form a certain worldview, which in turn, orients the civilizing process of society.<sup>92</sup>

Bennabi used the concept of the three realms contextually and did not provide definitions for each of them, but their definitions can be found through analysis and context.

#### (4.2) *The Nature of the Three Realms*

##### *The Realm of Persons*

In this section Bennabi introduces the concept of "person" which corresponds to his concept of the integrated man mentioned previously. For him, civilization does not start its process with the individual who is in a state of disintegration. Rather, it starts with the person who is a transformed individual integrated into society's activities.

Moreover, society is not a mere group of individuals living together, naturally, in a primitive manner, but one who experiences a civilizational transformation, and in turn transforms humans from mere individuals to persons by changing their primary qualities that link them to the species into social trends that would link them to society.<sup>93</sup>

Bennabi distinguishes between the person and the individual. The person is the transformed individual, the integrated man. The realm of persons represents a category of individuals who are transformed in their personality and in their relations. They are a group of people who are prepared to undertake a civilizational function in society, enjoy using all civilizing faculties to the benefit of society, and are prepared to function as a dynamic social agent of change and development. They have clear vision, are aware of their mission, and actively interact and

carry out their function as members of a community that intends to embark on a civilizing process.

On the other hand, the individual or disintegrated man is still incapable of realizing his civilizational role. He is in a state of passivity or inertia, and is unable to get involved in any civilizing process until he himself is transformed.

Bennabi's "realm of persons" denotes the sum total of relations, constructive or destructive, among a certain group, and emphasizes the significance of those relations.

Consequently, the destiny of society in its civilizing process is based on the nature or the quality of the relations in that system formed by the realm of persons. In this regard, Bennabi asserts that "It is these specific relations within the (realm of persons) which provide the necessary links between ideas and objects in the course of the activities undertaken by a society."<sup>94</sup>

To apply his concept in a concrete way, Bennabi explains this idea of relations among the realm of persons from the history of Muslim civilization by drawing attention to the situation of pre-Islamic Arabian society which the Qur'an calls the *Jāhili* (ignorant) society: "the realm of persons of the *Jāhiliyyan* society was confined to the boundaries of the tribe."<sup>95</sup>

Therefore, that society cannot be considered a transformed realm, able to carry out a civilizing process, because all its faculties were directed to achieve the very primitive objectives of a tribal system. That type of society represents, in Bennabi's terms, a pre-civilized stage in which all its capacities are blocked. Thus, in this case we no longer see the realm of persons but "individuals" living within the natural conditions, and who have no valuable participation in history.<sup>96</sup>

However, Bennabi argues that with the advent of Islam, those mere individuals without any vision or mission entered a new phase. That idea (i.e., Islam) replaced the paganist vision and the tribal system and brought a new worldview that transformed them into the realm of persons, which in turn heralded the birth of a new society and a new civilization based on the religious idea, that is Muslim society and Muslim civilization.



After the hijrah (migration) of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Madinah the integration process of Muslim society started in history. Its realm of persons was founded on a model manifested in the community of the *Anṣār* (people of Madinah) and the *Muhājirūn* (people of Makkah who migrated to Madinah). They founded the first Muslim society and gave the input for Muslim civilization within the framework of brotherhood in the city of Madinah.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, this is the realm of persons that drove Muslim society forward into world history.

### *The Realm of Ideas*

According to Bennabi, the realm of ideas consists of impressed ideas derived from sacred or secular sources, and function as a pattern that orients and guides society to certain kinds of values and ethics. It also consists of expressed ideas that represent methods, knowledge, and intellectual as well as civilizational contributions of the human mind in social progress.<sup>98</sup>

Both impressed and expressed ideas are the result of interaction with the sacred source and human nature and experience. However, the impressed ideas represent an ideal pattern (archetype) in the society that motivates and activates the individual to commence his historical role.

In the case of Muslim civilization, impressed ideas are derived from the revealed text, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah. Bennabi presents an example of this type of idea: fifteen centuries ago, Muslim society received in the form of a revelation its impressed message which was readily engraved in the subjectivity of the generation contemporary to *ghār hira'*<sup>99</sup> that made the world witness to one of its great civilizational transformations in history, from tribe-based society to ideas-based society. In the beginning, those impressed ideas transformed a primitive environment, and put vital energy within the limits of civilization subjecting it to its rules, norms, and strict disciplines.<sup>100</sup>

Bennabi considers civilization the result of a living, dynamic idea that mobilizes a pre-civilized society to enter history and construct a system of ideas according to its archetypes. Thereafter, society develops an authentic cultural milieu that, in return, controls all the

characteristics that distinguish that society from other cultures and civilizations.<sup>101</sup>

The realm of ideas gives vision and original patterns to society to formulate its civilization. This realm is the culture that was explained when the author discussed Bennabi's concept of orientation. It gives the distinctive character of such a civilization. Consequently, for Bennabi, the realm of ideas "takes root in an original cultural plasma which determines all its characteristics that distinguish it from other cultures and civilizations."<sup>102</sup>

The realm of ideas forms a prototype to be followed by all persons in a society, and makes the culture distinctive. It is like a musical disk individuals carry within them at birth. It varies from one society to another in some basic tones. From the emergence of a society, the disk is recorded with its culture and identity, and generations of individuals record their own special notes that harmonize with the basic notes of that society's culture.<sup>103</sup>

The role of this realm is to provide direction in a [human] society's course of history to achieve civilization and serve as the criteria for measuring the level of development. The latter is of great importance, because once the realm of ideas loses its control over the civilizing process, civilization will enter the decivilizing phase in which the realm of persons also starts to lose its functions and vision.

The realm of ideas is of crucial importance for society to undertake any constructive role in history. Therefore, Bennabi emphasizes the leading role of the impressed ideas that need to be in accordance with the original prototype to keep society active and alive.

### *The Realm of Objects*

The third realm, which comprises the three realms of society, is the realm of objects. It provides tools, channels, natural resources and instruments needed for the civilizing process. It has a twofold significance. First, it provides the material needs for the historical movement of society. Second, it expresses the position of society in its civilizing process. That is to say, the psycho-social implications of the relationships between the realm of objects and the realms of persons and ideas assist us in evaluating the phase in which we find that civilization.

What is important for Bennabi in this context is not only the availability of those objects, but also their relationship with people, how they consider those objects, and how they deal with them both psychologically and socially.<sup>104</sup>

In this regard, Bennabi argues that it is not the amount or the size of the objects that reflect the development or the degeneration of society, but the will and capacity of society to direct its objects in a civilizing process. In other words, it is the quality of people and the originality of ideas that influence and use the realm of objects in an effective and proper way.<sup>105</sup>

Here is an example of objects and their relation with people and ideas: early Muslim society started its civilizing process with a simple and poor realm of objects. However, because of the quality of man and ideas, it was able to go through the civilizing process, and to propagate its mission and civilization to the civilized societies of Byzantium, Egypt, Persia, and Mesopotamia.<sup>106</sup>

An examination of the realm of objects in Muslim society six centuries later when it began falling into a state of decadence, shows that it had at its disposal the richest libraries in the world at that time as well as a wide range of materials and instruments. Yet, it collapsed catastrophically. We can deduct that the wealth of a society cannot be measured only by the number of its objects but by the number of ideas, and it must not undermine the relationship of the realm of ideas with that of objects.

Consequently, it is the position of objects in the psychology of people that determines the efficiency of those objects.<sup>107</sup> In other words, it is important to consider the interrelatedness of the three realms and the dialectic dynamic relationship between them. In the following section, a discussion of that interrelatedness is expressed through the dialectic relationship among the three realms.

To sum up the analysis, Bennabi drew attention to the nature of the relationship between the three realms. He believed that they do not act separately, but are interrelated. They have common action, and their pattern is determined by ideological archetypes that originate from the realm of ideas applied to the realm of objects to achieve objectives specified by the realm of people.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, any historical activity or

action is the outcome of the dynamic interaction between people, ideas, and objects, and it has two levels: the internal relationship within the components of each realm itself, and the external relationship of each realm with the other two. Bennabi asserts that no historical activity can exist among these realms without necessary relations.<sup>109</sup> This linking implies, "the existence of a fourth realm which represents all the necessary social relations, or what we call the social relations network."<sup>110</sup>

### (5) The Concept of the Social Relations Network

The social relations network is one of Bennabi's concepts that has strong links with his understanding of the nature and dynamism of society from the socio-cultural and historical perspectives. Therefore, discussion of this concept is to be undertaken by means of an analysis of the meaning of the social relations network and its difference from the concept of society.

#### (5.1) Meaning of Social Relations Network

On the basis of the preceding discussion, the dialectic relationship between the three realms denotes and implies the existence of what Bennabi called "the social relations network," or "the sum-total of the necessary social relations."<sup>111</sup>

In other words, it is the minimum set of relations necessary to provide the internal link within the components of each realm, and the external links among the three realms necessary to mold them into an integrated body of relationships. The united action of the twofold link in a society can be accomplished in order to achieve a civilization.<sup>112</sup>

Bennabi considers the social relations network the cornerstone of society because it is not a mere gathering of individuals with simultaneous relations, but the internal and external relations between the three realms.<sup>113</sup>

The importance of this fourth realm, the social relations network, lies in its necessity to provide minimum necessary relations among the three realms for any historical action that attempts to construct a civilization. Consequently, the notion of the social relations network is of great importance because it is the sum total of the relations.



The three realms cannot function in the absence of the social relations network which is the result of the very conditions and circumstances that generate the historical movement itself, it is the first task to be accomplished by society in order to change its status:

[It] is a known fact that the first task a society carries out in the course of changing its status is conditional upon the completion of the network of its relations. Accordingly, one can assert that the social relations network is the first historical task society carries out upon its birth.<sup>114</sup>

Bennabi presents an example from Muslim history on the importance of the social relations network as a precondition and primary task for a society to undertake its civilizing process. The first historical task Muslim society ever undertook at the moment of its birth was the covenant of brotherhood between the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār*. It was the first weaving of its social relations network even though its three realms did not yet have their distinctive shapes.<sup>115</sup>

However, Bennabi's definition of the social relations network as the sum total of relations among and within the three realms may raise a question about the difference between this concept and the concept of society. Moreover, some may confuse the social relations network with Bennabi's concept of society.

Thus, the concept of social relations network introduced by Bennabi cannot be accurately understood unless within the context of his general framework regarding the definition of "society"; he formed his own concept of society in order to activate it and place it as the agent that produces civilization.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, a discussion of the relationship between the two concepts may unveil Bennabi's understanding of society in terms of its genesis and structure.

#### (5.2) *The difference between the Social Relations Network and Society*

At the onset, it is important to mention that Bennabi was of the view that the traditional sociological definition of society does not fit in with his approach to reconstructing Muslim civilization. For him, to

define the terminology that should be used, particularly for the term "society", is a methodological requirement necessary at the same time that we attempt to deal with theoretical concepts that concern the historical factors upon which the birth of society depends.<sup>117</sup>

However, before defining his concept of society Bennabi presented some methodological reservations as to the dominant sociological conceptions of society. He argues that the modern social sciences, of which sociology is part, have evolved and taken shape within the Western historical and civilizational context and they are, therefore, colored by the specific experience of Western societies. Therefore, the social sciences in general, and sociology in particular, derive their main concepts and categories from the cultural and philosophical foundations of that experience. Moreover, social problems and social phenomena have their own history and different courses of development in line with the cultural and civilizational context in which they have arisen.<sup>118</sup>

Bennabi was first and foremost concerned with how to reconstruct Muslim society, revive its culture and purge it from the negative elements inherited from its age of decline, as well as from the deformities it suffered under Western colonialism.<sup>119</sup>

Consequently, he emphasized the need for what he termed the "sociology of independence". The task of this new sociology is to contribute to the reformulation of our social relations network, as well as the formation of a new synthesis of man, soil, and time so that Muslim society may begin its civilizing process. The starting point for that new sociology is the redefinition of the term society.<sup>120</sup>

Mesawi mentions that Bennabi considered the traditional definitions of society merely superficial and descriptive, and did not answer two basic questions: 1) what is the historical function which such an aggregate of individuals fulfils? and 2) what is the nature of the internal organization and the mechanism that enables society to carry out that historical function?<sup>121</sup>

At the beginning of *Milād Mujtama'* (The Birth of Society), Bennabi discusses the diversity of social phenomena to which the term "society" can be applied.

He paid attention to the fundamental difference between the natural or primitive society and the historical society. While the former has

not changed its characteristics in any tangible manner since it came into existence, the latter has subsequently transformed its fundamental features in accordance with the laws that have governed its evolution.<sup>122</sup> That is to say, while the natural society is a static society, the historical society is a dynamic one that changes continuously its ideas and its cultural and civilizational situation.<sup>123</sup>

Bennabi also considered the dynamism of the notion of historical society as dynamic and subject to the laws of change as it modifies its features and stages. However, the historical society varies in terms of both its genesis and structure.

In terms of the diversity of social phenomena, Bennabi asserts that the advent of the historical society is not accidental, regardless of its genesis or construction. For him, it is a result of a continuous process of transformation to which both the borrowing and the lending societies contribute. That process occurs in accordance with three factors: 1) the historical sources of the process of continuing change, 2) the elements which, under the impact of the above-mentioned process of change, move from its pre-social stage to a new social stage, and 3) the general laws and norms that govern the process of change.<sup>124</sup>

The first observation in *Milād Mujtama'*, mentioned previously, suggests that the historical society is also subject to degrees of variation related to the historical circumstances of its birth, and historical variation concerns the genesis of human society. Consequently, there are two kinds of historical societies:

(a) the *geographical type*, whose birth takes place in response to the challenge posed by the natural circumstances of its environment. The present American society belongs to this type for it is the result of a European migration in which people had to adapt to the natural conditions of the new continent.

(b) the *ideational (ideological) type*, which comes into existence in response to the appeal of a certain ideal. Muslim and early European society (Western Christendom), as well as the former Soviet society belong to this type.<sup>125</sup>

Regarding the structure of the historical society, Bennabi added that there is also a variation which originates from its very core. In this context, he distinguished between the societies whose structure is based on several classes (strata) and those societies based on one class (stratum).

For Bennabi, Muslims belong to the model of a one stratum society. Its structure takes a homogeneous form that is more or less in accordance with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad who says: "A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other."<sup>126</sup> This hadith presents the precise picture of the Muslim society during the time of the Prophet.<sup>127</sup>

Bennabi argues that although there are historical and structural variations in human society, there are a number of characteristics common to all the aforementioned types:

Regardless of its historical or structural type, a society is not a mere aggregate of individuals brought together in a given social framework because of the instinct of living in a group which is the means of the formation of a society not cause of its genesis. The society, in fact, includes more than a mere group of individuals who would give it its shape. It includes a number of constant fundamentals to which a society is indebted for its continuity and identity almost independently of its individual members.<sup>128</sup>

Going beyond the superficial descriptive definition of the term society, Bennabi argues also that those constant fundamentals provide for society its particular characteristics that guarantee its continuity, preserve its identity, and fulfill its function in history. Consequently, those constant fundamentals constitute the essence of society because they determine the age of a society, its stability over time, and enable it to face all the circumstances of its history.<sup>129</sup>

Finally, this essence of society is but its social relations network. The latter has a twofold function. It links members of society to each other, and directs the various activities towards the fulfilment of a common function which is the specific mission and vocation of that society. Bennabi further asserted that the formation of the social



relations network, even in its preliminary stage, is the expression of the birth of a society in history.<sup>130</sup>

The very essence of society and the very important position of the social relations network in the birth of a historical society is a prior condition to the entire process.

The essence of society is but its social relations network which has two functions: first, it links the members of the society to one another; second, it confers guidance and orientation upon the various activities of individuals towards the fulfillment of a common function, which is the specific mission and vocation of the society. Therefore, the formation of the social relations network, even in its preliminary stage, is the expression of the event of the birth of a society in history.<sup>131</sup>

Wrapping up this section, the social relations network focuses on its meaning and importance as well as the way in which the term differs from society, and the social relations network is the essence and the culmination of the dialectical minimum set of relations among and within the three realms which enable the civilizing process to achieve its objectives.

#### (6) Conclusion

Bennabi was concerned about providing a conceptual framework to resolve the present situation of Muslim society. This led him to formulate his own concept of civilization, which is in its essence multidimensional, and needs an interdisciplinary approach.

To do so, Bennabi used the analytical method to provide us with the structural elements of civilization, man, soil, and time, and introduced his concept of religious ideas as the catalyst of civilization. Moreover, the author examined Bennabi's concept of man as the primary device of civilization, his idea of orientation, and the concept of the integrated versus the disintegrated man.

The author also discussed the concept of the three realms as the three social categories derived from the equation of civilization in order to socially understand the levels of the civilizing process and its social components. And lastly the author addresses the social relations network which completes the picture of the social categories of society

and forms the fourth realm. It is, according to Bennabi, the sum total of the relations among the three realms which serves as the link both internally and externally. It is also the precondition of the birth of society in Bennabi's approach.

This present analysis was mainly structural in order to find the main organizational concepts of Bennabi's approach. The next chapter approaches Bennabi's interpretation of the movement of civilization from a synthetically oriented perspective so as to understand how, using his method of synthesis, he interpreted the various elements in their dynamic interaction to form civilization.

## Bennabi's Interpretation of the Movement of Civilization

This chapter discusses the second part of Bennabi's approach to civilization, his interpretation of the movement of civilization, the cyclical movement of civilization, the three stages of society, the three ages of society, and the three states of the network of social relations.

### THE CYCLICAL MOVEMENT OF A CIVILIZATION

To attain understanding, the author will look at Bennabi's definition, concept, characteristics, and cycle of Muslim civilization.

#### (1) Definition of the Cycle of Civilization

Bennabi describes his view of the cycle of civilization in the following passage:

Civilization presents itself as a numerical series following its course in similar but not-identical terms. Thus appears an essential notion of history: the cycle of civilization. Each cycle is defined by certain psycho-temporal conditions proper to a social group: it is a "civilization" in these conditions. Then the civilization migrates, shifts its abode, and transfers its values in another area. It thus perpetuates itself in an indefinite exodus, through successive metamorphoses: each metamorphosis being a particular synthesis of man, soil, and time.<sup>1</sup>

The above passage quoted from Bennabi's *Islam in History and Society* suggests some points; first, it suggests that a civilization in general, follows one course and it is patterned. Each social group imprints its specific characteristic upon civilization.

Second, it mentions the psycho-temporal condition of each civilization which means that among the civilizations of the world each has its living identity that distinguishes it from others.

Third, it denotes that if civilizations differ in their identity and character, we must underline their diversity and integrity. They differ in their specific psycho-temporal conditions, but are similar in their general pattern in the course of history.

Fourth, the notion of cycle finds its *raison d'être* in the diversity of civilizational experiences according to each society. An example is the character of migration, the shift from one place to another. Bennabi asserts that civilization begins its cycle when it finds the dynamic synthesis of its fundamental elements within the frame of the religious idea, and finishes it when those fundamental elements are no longer involved in such dynamic interaction.

In this context, every civilization plays its role in history until it reaches the state of decline and ceases to develop and lead humanity. Then another civilization should start anew to formulate its cycle in history. It is this transitory process of civilization that justifies in history the cyclical phenomenon.

There is an important point that helps us to understand what Bennabi means by the notion of the cycle of civilization as a phenomenon and pattern. In other words, Bennabi gives many names to the concept of the cyclical movement of civilization, such as the "cyclical phenomenon", the "pattern of civilization", the "cycle of civilization," and the "phenomenon of civilization".<sup>2</sup> The various names satisfy Bennabi's intention to show that the movement of civilization is patterned.

Every civilization passes through three phases in its course to form its cycle in history: the spirit, reason, and instinct. When the civilization reaches the third phase, the transitory process commences to shift the values and the seeds of civilization to another era. Thus a new synthesis of man, soil, and time emerges in history to initiate a new



civilization with different characteristics and a distinct psychosocial context.

Bennabi argues that any society in its civilizing process will follow a defined pattern which leads to a civilizational transformation. After the pre-civilized, a society in its second stage (civilized stage) will go through three phases the soul (the spiritual), reason (the rational), and instinct (the instinctive).<sup>3</sup>

Historically speaking, this is the general pattern of every civilization. Its development can be observed historically as a series of three phases that form a cycle. Bennabi also asserts that history has a cyclical movement and sequence. It sometimes records the glittering aspects of the nation, and at other times the worst states of degeneration and decline. The notion of a cycle is very important in addressing social problems. It helps in determining our position in the cycle of history, in understanding our situation, the causes of our decline, and the potentials of our progress.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of the cycle plays a paramount role in explaining the movement of civilization. The cyclical concept is likewise postulated as the underlying framework for the analysis and understanding of human social existence.<sup>5</sup>

Bennabi did not invent this notion, he developed it from Ibn Khaldūn whose influence on Bennabi is very clear.

In fact, Bennabi himself admits in various passages of his books to his borrowing on many occasions the notion of the cycle from Ibn Khaldūn. In a passage of *Islam in History and Society*, Bennabi says:

It was Ibn Khaldūn who, inspired by Islamic psychological factors, disentangled the notion of cycle in his theory of the (Three generations), wherein the terminology, somewhat summarized, masks the profoundness of the idea by reducing the dimensions of a civilization to the scale of the dynasty ('*Aṣabiyyah*). Even if narrow, this concept invites us to emphasize the transitory aspect of civilization.<sup>6</sup>

Although Bennabi has developed his own concept of the notion of the cycle, it is clear that he was much attracted to Ibn Khaldūn's emphasis on the transitory aspect of civilization. In other words, he

suggests that human civilization should start from a given point and follow a determined pattern, which will finally lead to its end. In the final phase, the values of civilization should transit and move forward to another place. This transition implies the existence of a cycle.

At this point, the author will present the characteristics of the three phases of the cycle of civilization, and Bennabi's cycle of Muslim civilization, that may help to discuss the social and historical aspects of the notion, respectively.

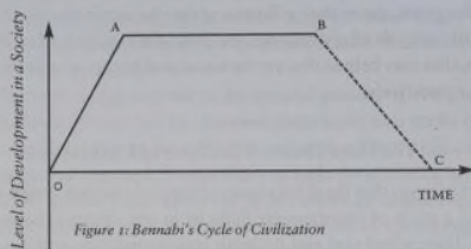
## (2) The Three Phases of the Cycle of Civilization

Bennabi believes that the three phases of the cycle are not a mere evolution and a series of spontaneous shifts from one situation to another. Rather, they reflect real and in-depth transformations and modifications in the human personality and in the social relations network of society. These changes and transformations in both the individual and in society start with the first interaction between the three realms, framed within a religious idea and the milieu it provides. To attain an understanding of the three phases in a psychosocial context, the author will examine the psychological change in the individual and the sociological change in society when a religious idea begins in history.

A religious idea formulates two important instruments of the civilizing process: the social relations network, which represents the new realm of people, and the quality and nature of psychological reflections towards the new principles and teachings of the religion. The latter is called the system of conditioned reflexes.

Before the construction of social relations in society, it they should be first formulated within the human soul and internal faculties. Therefore, when we talk about social relations we should relate them to the system of conditioned reflexes. A diagram (see figure 1) illustrates Bennabi's interpretation of the course of civilization.<sup>7</sup> It shows the development of a civilization that takes the form of a cycle with three phases, and allows the reader to see the psycho-temporal values represented by the vertical axis denoting the level of development of the social relations network of a society. It also denotes the social level of the system, of its conditioned reflexes at any phase in its history.<sup>8</sup>

It is easy to identify the relationship between these two concepts and each of the three phases illustrated in the diagram.<sup>9</sup>



#### (a) The Spiritual Phase

The zero point in the cycle (figure 1) represents the position preceding a civilization, and points to the beginning of the occurrence of the exceptional circumstances necessary to generate the historical organic synthesis of the three factors: Man, Soil, and Time.

It is this synthesis that actually marks the birth of a society as it coincides, in certain respects, with the beginning of its historical action. At this point, the social values have not yet become a concrete reality. They are but mere possibilities. Moreover, the society itself is a mere possibility that belongs to the future course of history.<sup>10</sup>

It is the point where a religious idea emerges and gives society its driving force, its spiritual push, and provides the milieu that enables the abovementioned synthesis. This synthesis declares the birth of a civilization and coincides with the starting of its historical action. Thus, Bennabi declares that it is the spiritual relationship between God and man that creates and determines the social bonds that link every individual with his fellow humans.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, at the beginning of every civilization a religious idea, in its broad meaning, sows the spiritual seeds that will generate

the movement of a civilization. Hence, the spiritual phase begins to dominate the life of the individual and of society. All activities and actions of the individual are under the total direction of the soul and its driving force. Any modification or change in this society is indebted to the spiritual force that emerges with the religious idea.

During this phase, the individual will be transformed into a person, and the disintegrated man will be changed into an integrated man (see Chapter Two) because the historical transformation of society begins with the integrated person who begins dynamic relationships with his milieu.

Bennabi explains this (spiritual) phase in two different, but integrated ways. The sociological way shows us that this phase refers to the state in which the social relations network is at its highest level of density even if it is not at its largest degree of expansion. This is what is described by the Qur'an as "firm and compact building" quoted by Bennabi<sup>12</sup> and mentioned in the Qur'anic verse: "Verily, God loves (only) those who fight in his cause in (solid) ranks, as though they were a building, firm and compact."<sup>13</sup>

The psychological way shows that the spiritual phase corresponds to the state in which the individual is in his best condition, and the system of his conditioned reflexes reaches its utmost effectiveness, with his vital energy at its optimum level of organization and orientation.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, this is the state of social relations at the spiritual stage where every activity of the individual or society is under the control of the law of the Spirit. Hence, the individual and society in this phase enjoy a dynamic civilizing movement that rejects carelessness and passiveness.

According to Bennabi, psychologically this phase represents what some Muslim scholars call *fiṭrah* (human nature), i.e., the individual is fully equipped with all his innate instincts, he is the man of nature (*homonatura*). It is the phase in which the religious ideas begins its function in putting those instincts into a process of conditioning and adaptation that represents what is known in Freudian psychology as Repression (see Chapter Seven). However, this process of conditioning and adaptation does not eradicate those instincts but organizes them in a functional relationship with the requirements of the religious idea.



Consequently, the vital energy represented by instincts is not abolished but subjugated to the rules of a specific order. At this phase, the individual is partly liberated from the biological laws to which he is naturally disposed because he is totally under the control of the spiritual considerations imprinted in his soul by the religious idea. Therefore, he engages in life, in this new state, based on the laws of the Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

An example among many of an individual under the laws of the Spirit is taken from the history of the first generation of Islam which is considered to be the spiritual phase for Muslim civilization in its previous cycle. Bennabi asserts that the force of spirit allowed Bilāl<sup>16</sup> to challenge, with his finger raised as a sign pointing to the oneness of God, the entire *Jahiliyyah* despite the atrocious tortures to which he was subjected.<sup>17</sup>

#### (b) The Rational Phase

The spiritual phase does not last forever. Rather, it starts decreasing with the development of the society, the rise of material problems, and the expansion of civilization. Thus, when a society arrives at certain limits the spiritual forces start losing their total control over the activities of reason and instinct.

Therefore, civilization moves into the second (rational) phase (from A to B in figure 1). Here all activities fall under the control of reason while civilization maintains its progress in the course of history.

With the shift of civilization into the rational phase the society enjoys its well-developed relations network while it is in a state of full expansion, but suffers from certain defects, certain wounds, and faces certain crises that start to surface in the life of the society. For instance, the Muslim civilization suffered during the Abbasid<sup>18</sup> era where society faced the Aghlabid<sup>19</sup> dynasty in North Africa seeking independence, and the nationalist movement in Persia.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it continues its development but carries the malaise in its body.

To put it in psychological terms, the individual no longer has full control over his vital energy while performing his social functions. Consequently, a part of his instincts is no longer subject to his conditioned reflex system; the religious idea starts to lose its full control over instincts and energies of the individual.

However, society still follows its course of development and progress. This is due, for the most part, to the initial force of faith breathed into the society in the previous phase.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, not all the civilizing forces are working. Rather, parts of the society's forces and energies have fallen into a state of inactivity, and others have declined. In the course of Muslim civilization, Bennabi exemplified this situation with the *Murji'ah*<sup>22</sup> and *al-Qarāmiṭah*<sup>23</sup> movements. Whereas the civilizing faculties of the former fell into a complete state of apathy, those of the latter were operating in opposition to the direction of the society and against its ideal.<sup>24</sup>

The social relations network reaches its perfect state as much as its religious idea continues its expansion over the world. At the same time, civilization reaches a new turning point in order to cope with new problems and pressing new needs and necessities, and the emergence of a new order and new standards. The latter, for instance, coincides with the Renaissance in the case of the European cycle, and with the advent of the Umayyad<sup>25</sup> dynasty in the case of the Islamic cycle. In both cycles, the new turning point was that of reason. Unlike the soul, reason does not exert total control over natural instincts which gradually emancipate. Such was the situation during the Umayyad period, when the soul began losing its control and influence over those instincts, and society ceased to exert its pressure over the individual.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the history of a civilization, the process of its evolution manifests its effects on the psychology of the individual as well as on the moral structure of society which ceases to adjust the behavior of the individual. The more emancipated the instinctive energies become, the less the individual's actions become subjected to moral considerations. On this point of the manifestations of the phase of reason, Bennabi argues that:

[I]f one was able to measure by means of an accurate device these psychological conditions so as to discern their implications – as one would do in the laboratories of natural sciences – then it would have been possible to notice a decrease in the moral standards of the society. In other words, we would have witnessed that as soon as the society enters the phase of reason, the social efficacy of the religious idea starts to decrease at an alarming rate.<sup>27</sup>

However, the rational phase also does not last forever. When rational forces start losing their control over the activities of the individual, civilization faces a new context in which the instinctive forces begin to dominate the spiritual and rational ones.

(c) *The Instinctive Phase*

Once reason loses its control over the activities of the individual and society (point B to C in figure 1), civilization enters the third or instinctive phase. Here, every activity of individual and society is under the control of instincts. Accordingly, civilization pushes into the post-civilized stage, and its values move on to another place where a new synthesis of man, soil, and time will start.

In this third phase, the natural instincts of the individual are no longer under the control of religious ideas or society. Bennabi explains this state in the following revealing passage:

They [internal instincts] no longer function as a harmonious whole. Rather, they operate individually in pursuit of selfish interests due to the fact that the conditioning order of the vital energy has broken down. Thus, vital energy loses its social function and is no more subject to the conditioned reflex mechanism which is supposed to promote the process of adaptation and orientation of that energy. Consequently, it is individualism that prevails as a result of the freedom of instincts. Thus, the social relations network is totally dissolved.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, this phase represents the disintegration of those qualities and talents as they are influenced by instincts, freed from the tutorship of both spirit and reason. At this stage, no common activity is possible at all, for it is chaos and lawlessness that actually prevail. Such was the state of Muslim society during the era of the *Mulūk al-Tawa'if*<sup>29</sup> of Andalusia and onwards.<sup>30</sup> We have seen that for Bennabi instincts are not freed at once, but are gradually liberated as the control of the soul decreases gradually.<sup>31</sup> They struggle to emancipate, and gradually gain back their dominance over the individual and society. When instincts are completely liberated, man's destiny falls under their influence, the third phase of civilization begins, and the religious idea

ceases to fulfil its social function. Consequently, society plunges into a state of disintegration, and it marks the end of a cycle of civilization.<sup>32</sup>

The end of a cycle occurs when a society reaches the third phase of its evolution, when the breath that gave it the first impulse ceases to animate it. This signals the exodus of the civilization towards another space, where another cycle commences on a new bio-historical synthesis. Curiously, during this phase the efforts of science lose all significance. In addition, when the inspiration of the soul ceases, the rational work also tends to stop: man loses the thirst to understand and the will to act. The moment he loses the aspiration and the impulse of faith, reason also disappears because its efforts perish in a setting that can no longer understand or utilize them. Ibn Khaldūn's ideas went unheeded for centuries because the Muslim man and the Muslim society lost their thirst to understand or act, and they lost their inspiration.<sup>33</sup>

The three phases, spiritual, rational, and instinctive have their distinctive characteristics, both sociologically and psychologically. Each brings changes and modifications at the level of the individual as well as the level of society. The phases have their psychosocial dimension that has an impact on the individual and on society.

The dimensions remind the reader, at Bennabi's insistence (see Chapter One), of the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of civilization and its issues, namely psychology and sociology, among other sciences, in the study of civilization.

(3) *The Universality of the Cycle of Civilization*

The notion of the cycle is universal and applicable to all civilizations. Therefore, this is the march of every civilization in its development.

Bennabi maintains that civilizations are but a series of interrelated cycles similar in their phases to those of the Muslim and Christian civilizations. The first phase commences when a religious idea emerges, and it ends when the instinctive forces dominate the spiritual and rational forces. For him, almost all historical societies are subjected to this pattern, and the historical experience guarantees these phases of the evolution of civilizations. Almost no civilization is an exception to this rule.<sup>34</sup>



The generality and universality of this pattern is expressed clearly in the following passage from Bennabi's *Islam in History and Society*:

A cycle born in certain psycho-temporal conditions develops from there, and when a civilization has outstripped them, it is the end of a cycle. Another commences in new conditions that are, in turn, passed by. This law treks across millennia of history, and humanity slowly scales this path that mounts in gentle ascent.<sup>35</sup>

The passage shows the general pattern of the transitional process of values and seeds of civilization from one context to another.

Bennabi sees that this complete cycle of civilization, with its three phases, gives us a clear view about the vital energy of civilization and how it transforms from one phase to another. This is especially true during the time of the first phase where this vital energy is totally under the control and influence of the order of the religious idea.<sup>36</sup>

A careful analysis of a cycle of a civilization shows the conditions under which the process of organization and orientation of that vital energy is carried out under the guidance of the religious idea:

This observation is of crucial importance for any project aimed at reorganizing that energy so as to reconstruct the society's relations network. In fact, this task of reorganization requires the same conditions, that is to say, the revival of the religious idea.<sup>37</sup>

The concept of the cycle of civilization is an important notion in interpreting the course of civilization. It allows us to follow the development of the civilizing process throughout the course of history. It can also help in observing the function of the religious idea, the transformation of values, the interaction of man, soil, and time, and to monitor the various changes and modifications that occur in the entire evolution of a civilization. Moreover, the three phases of the cycle as well as their psychosocial impact provide any researcher who undertakes a study on civilization the tools to analyze its entire process and to understand its phenomenon.

Hence, knowing each phase of the evolution of civilization and understanding its characteristics will provide us with a general framework of development and evolution, and their corresponding context and phases. Thus, it enables us to deal with any problem posed at any moment in a methodological way.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, the discussion helps us to understand only one stage in the historical development of society, which includes those three phases. Therefore, Bennabi introduces the concept of the three stages of society that looks at the movement of civilization from another perspective.

#### THE CONCEPT OF THE THREE STAGES OF SOCIETY

According to Bennabi, every human society in its historical development is in a psychosocial situation that influences the life of the individual as well as that of the society itself. It changes and differs from one society to another and from one period to another. This change depends on the general development of a society and its position in the movement of its evolution.

Based on Bennabi's categorization of societies, a human society does not fix itself at one point or situation throughout its life. On the contrary, it transfers from one situation to another following the psychosocial values of its development. Therefore, it is indispensable to know the position of the society in the developmental axis, so as to identify the stage of that society, its related problems, as well as its accomplishments:

In general, on the axis representing the stages of development, a historical society – whether contemporary or past – has to occupy a specific location. Indeed, history reveals the existence of three stages: 1) the pre-civilized society, 2) the civilized society, and 3) the post civilized society.<sup>39</sup>

At any moment each society is at one of these three specific stages. At each stage, it is characterized by specific values. The passage also reveals that human societies are not located in one analogous stage.

Rather, each society is at a determined stage. Throughout humanity's history, societies are to be located either at the pre-civilized, civilized, or post-civilized stage.

As mentioned in previous chapters, Bennabi's use of the interdisciplinary approach can be traced here. In this section, his focus on the use of history, sociology, and psychology in understanding the issues of civilization seems to be of methodological importance. He uses psychosocial interpretation to explain the historical journey of a society to discover the features of the present Muslim world.<sup>40</sup>

Psychosocial interpretation takes into consideration the individual and society as two variables, and the concept of the three stages can be used as a tool for the interpretation of the movement of human society as well as the states of the individual. Through this concept we can draw a comprehensive picture of the different situations and states of the evolution of society and the values in its civilization.

### (1) The Pre-Civilized Society

A society in the pre-civilized stage has not yet started its civilizing process.<sup>41</sup> However, it has its own peculiarities not only in the domain of material development but also in the field of awareness, the style of the culture, quality of mind and nature of its movement.

In fact, this type of society is still incapable of making history or playing its role in the development of human civilization. This passivity prevents the society from performing any civilizing movement or historical expression. Therefore, its vital energy, civilizing faculties, and capacity remain in a state of passivity; it is not capable of performing that important action that may drive it into history and push it to embark on the civilizing process.

Bennabi views the individual in pre-civilized society as the natural man (*homonatura*). He is ready – as was the Arab Bedouin during the Prophet Muhammad's era – to enter a cycle of civilization and undertake a civilizing process. The individual at this stage – if we borrow terms from chemical science – is like a water molecule, full of preserved energy, able to contribute in a useful action.<sup>42</sup> Pre-civilized society is located in a dead state while the pre-civilized man is in a state of

potentiality. It is the case of the Arab man before the advent of Islam. At that time, the individual was lacking a vision and a mission. Thus, his thought did not go beyond his tribe and daily activities.

Bennabi argues that the best example of life in pre-civilized societies does not change its shape and form but reflects humankind's previous experience in pre-historic age.<sup>43</sup>

The driving force that motivates civilizing faculties is what a pre-civilized society needs to construct a civilization because it owns the primary elements of civilization, i.e., man, soil, and time. However, they are in an unmovable position without the force of the religious idea. The latter, as seen in the previous chapter, is the catalyst of civilizational values, as well as the motivator that provides the environment for a dynamic interaction between these elements. This society cannot begin its civilizing process and propel itself to a civilized stage without the dynamic interaction between man, soil and time within the frame of the religious idea, neither does society undertake its civilizing process nor witnesses any psychosocial transformations.

To sum up, Bennabi asserts that understanding the characteristics of this stage will enable us to see the psycho-social development of the individual and society, and mark the starting point to deal with that society. In addition, it will be possible to propose appropriate plans and means to activate and transform its spirit and values towards a civilizing task. Moreover, it depicts the psychology of man and the culture of society, which is the psychology of an uncomplicated man who is in a natural state (*fiṭrah*), not yet exhausted by a civilizational experience. Society at that stage is ready to undertake a civilizing movement because all of its capacities are aimed at a social project.

### (2) The Civilized Society

Unlike pre-civilized society, characterized by the spirit of inertia and stagnation, civilized society is distinguished by its efficiency and movement. Bennabi argues that this is the birth of a society<sup>44</sup> because the group achieves the quality of society when it starts moving, when it begins to change itself in order to achieve its goals. In historical perspective, this event coincides with the emergence of a civilization.<sup>45</sup>



The civilized stage reflects the ability of a society to organize and orient its civilizing aptitude and faculties to a maximum. At this stage, all individual's and society's concentration and skills are directed towards the accomplishment of a civilizing process.

The dynamism of the stage allows this group of people to formulate its own civilization that has its own worldview and culture. Thus, it becomes a civilized society, and it "could provide the necessary requirements for the individual, whatever his status is in the society."<sup>46</sup> Bennabi provides us with an example:

One day I was sitting in a cafeteria (in France) with an Algerian scholar who has all the intellectual and moral qualities that enable him to be of high social status. However, he was expressing to me his suffering from difficulties which he and his family were facing. After a time he left, and I kept sitting while a French lady entered in the cafe. She looked drunk, and of bad behavior, with an ugly face. She stood on one foot and started singing as badly as I have never heard before. After that she walked around asking for money from the attendees. I was astonished when she collected more than what could fulfil the need of my friend and his family for more than one week.<sup>47</sup>

Bennabi implies that the happiness of the individual is not a personal matter, but a social one. As long as the individual is attached to a civilized society he will find the necessities guaranteed for him. On the contrary, in the case of the Algerian, because he is attached to occupied Algerian society, which does not provide or ensure those necessary requirements, his characteristics did not help him to live comfortably.<sup>48</sup>

The endeavour to achieve civilization reveals the level of liveliness and maturity of man and the style of his culture. As seen in Chapter Three, Bennabi asserts that "civilization commences with the integrated man, constantly adapting his efforts to his ideals and needs, and accomplishing in society his double mission of actor and witness."<sup>49</sup> He argues that man is the driving force behind any civilized society that starts its civilizing process with integrated man, but ends with disintegrated man. In other words, this stage of development owes its existence to the well-organized movement of man himself who is prepared to initiate a civilizing process.

At this moment, the social relations network is at its strongest, and society enjoys an active culture, an effective movement, a clear vision, and a systematic project for action. Moreover, it enjoys its highest level of cohesion and interrelatedness, as we have seen in the previous example about the Algerian scholar during the French occupation era of Algeria.

In this context, society has the ability and the capacity to protect its civilization and to keep its pace of development. Bennabi mentioned this when he asserted that the function of society is to preserve the individual, and to achieve the objectives of its group.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, all individuals at this stage enjoy the protection of society, and society itself reaches its objective: it accomplishes its civilizing function.

### (3) The Post-Civilized Society

When society reaches the post-civilized stage, it arrives at the end of its dynamism. It also loses its civilizing capacities, stops moving forward along its original path, and goes through a state of backwardness and decline.

Consequently, the religious idea ceases to synthesize the civilizational values, the social relations network starts degenerating, society's dynamic features lose their living force and motivating function, and society starts on a downward spiral.

The downfall is not fated. Another civilizing action may prevent society from that dark destiny and change its path of decline to a new civilizing process, although it is difficult in this stage.<sup>51</sup> Disintegration and demise follow a gradual process:

First, society produces the disintegrated man who is exhausted and no longer able to undertake any historical action.

Second, upon the disintegration and dissolution of man, society starts losing its criteria and standards that determined the vision and organization of the mission during the second stage (civilized stage).

Society has lost its cultural framework, its realm of ideas is now in a state of chaos, and its culture is no longer civilizing. Rather, it becomes a culture of backwardness and confusion where society settles in the post-civilized stage, a sign of the end of any civilizing function.

The individual becomes disintegrated and dissolved, and the culture of the community becomes decivilizing, it loses the ability to provide a vision and a mission for development. It is the disintegration of the value system, the individual, and the society.

On the three stages of development in general, and the third stage in particular, Bennabi makes a methodological remark: it is the confusion about this stage and the lack of comprehensive understanding of its characteristics that led to the confusion among historians and other scholars between society at this stage and society in the first stage.<sup>52</sup>

The next section addresses Bennabi's emphasis on the differences between the three stages with a focus on the features of the third stage and its importance to the present situation in the Muslim world.

#### (4) The Importance of the Post-Civilized Stage

Historians usually distinguish between the first and second stage. However, they usually make no distinction between the second and third stage. They do not draw attention to the reality of the third stage which they consider to be an extended part of the second. Therefore, they consider that post-civilized society follows the course of civilization.<sup>53</sup>

Bennabi criticizes the position of historians in stating the difference between the stages. For him, the confusion between stages should be removed: "post-civilized society is by no means a fixed society, but one that has reversed the order of its course. Thus, it evolves backwardly, as it has deviated from and broken the path of its civilization."<sup>54</sup> In other words, post-civilized society is not motionless but moving downwards or backwards, after having deviated from the path of its civilization and after having lost the links with its ideal.<sup>55</sup>

This confusion of stages will complicate any effort to resolve the problems of a society at such stage because there is a difference between a society yet to enter a civilizing process (the pre-civilized stage) and a society that has already experienced such a process (post-civilized stage) and is exhausted and unable to carry out any civilizing action or activity. The confusion of stages also creates the delusion, when it sees a society at the third stage, as it is in the second stage.<sup>56</sup>

Bennabi's attitude towards historians' confusion about the third stage does not prevent him from acknowledging that there are some historians who succeed in avoiding that confusion. Ibn Khaldūn was able to comprehend this phenomenon and describe it dramatically. One century after the fall of Baghdad and before that of Granada, he was able to note the breaking point in the cycle of Muslim civilization. It was from that point that the post-*al-Muwahhid* era started, the post-civilization era of the Muslim world.<sup>57</sup>

Bennabi concurs that the post-*al-Muwahhid* era started from the point indicated by Ibn Khaldūn which denotes the breaking point in the course of Muslim society and the starting of the post-civilized stage in the Muslim society. It is at this stage that society wanders beyond the limits of its original path. It is the moment of inflection and disintegration that leads to a huge change in the socio-cultural life of the society.<sup>58</sup>

Holding this view, society at the post-civilized stage continues its movement, but it may become destructive and harmful. Therefore, differentiating between this stage and others is significant and helpful in determining the position and the situation of the society.

This distinction is an indicator of the transformation and change in values and mentalities within one single society or within different societies. Accordingly, our treatment of the situation should be related to the new transformation which occurs in the life of both the individual and society at a given stage.

Regarding the individual, Bennabi argues that man is either living at a pre-civilization stage, in the comfort of a civilization stage, or he has left civilization (post-civilization). The three stages are different from each other because their living contexts vary based on the quality of values and the nature of man in a specific moment of development.<sup>59</sup>

Civilized man is different than the uncivilized man, and we should compare between the man who has left the civilization stage with the one who has not yet entered the civilizing stage. The man who is beyond or has withdrawn from civilization contains some remnants of civilization; he creates greater difficulties for society than one who has not yet entered into civilization.<sup>60</sup>



In his intellectual endeavour Bennabi tried to resolve the problems of the present situation in the Muslim world by considering that it is at the third stage.

Bennabi was concerned about finding a solution for a Muslim world living in stagnation and backwardness, theoretically and practically. He was concerned with the third stage because he realized that the Muslim world was at this stage, and any solution or treatment should take into consideration the nature and type of crisis faced at the post-civilized level.

If the Muslim world is at the third stage, this knowledge enables it to face the challenges the stage presents because society loses any originality in thought or behaviour compared to other stages.<sup>61</sup>

In order to resolve its problems, society needs to regain its originality and dynamic behavior by creating a new man liberated from the characteristics of post-civilized man who is able to enter into a new synthesis with time and soil, and into dynamic interaction with a religious idea.

Bennabi argues that it is important to observe in which stage of history we are located, to understand our situation, and to know the causes either of our backwardness or of our development. In other words, it is important to know our position in the cycle of history to understand the causes of development or downward trend in our life.<sup>62</sup>

He insists that we cannot merely suggest a solution to cure the maladies of the Muslim civilization without taking into consideration the concept of the stages and the factors of historical development of every society. Social problems are historical, which means that what is convenient for a given society at a certain stage or period of its development may become totally harmful at another because societies have different stages, different vocations, and different objectives.<sup>63</sup>

The statement leads to the realization that no one can suggest solutions and methods without first considering the status of his society, without fitting his ideas, emotions, sayings, and efforts into the stage in which his society is situated.<sup>64</sup>

Bennabi provided an analysis of the three stages and their corresponding characteristics, and of psychosocial situations and

psycho-cultural values to empower researchers to understand and to deal correctly with their conditions and impact. He focused a great deal on the stage of post-civilized society and on the characteristics of the post-civilized man in order to draw the distinction between the three stages.

The key of distinguishing between these stages opens up the features and characteristics of the civilizing movement of a specific stage. It allows the observers of the society's movement to draw attention to the organization, structure, function, and dynamism of the society at that stage. Accordingly scholars, leaders, and policy makers can specify, based on the picture they have drawn of the society, how to deal with the problems and acknowledge the achievements.

To sum up the three stages, I suggest that Bennabi used this concept to present it to researchers as an analysis tool to measure the status and the different features of the society at every stage in the scale of development. The three stages also explain how certain patterns and laws govern human society. Subsequently, researchers may discover the features of such stages and the values they reveal to deal correctly with them. The concept and the examples Bennabi presented reveal also that the Muslim world today is in a state of crisis and dilemma, and we need to examine it to know whether it is at the pre-civilized or post-civilized stage. For Bennabi, the Muslim world is at the third stage, and it is now making various efforts to resume its civilizing process. It has to understand its situation in order to make this change possible, and to cope with the conditions of its stage to resolve its corresponding problems within the framework of new civilizational efforts.<sup>65</sup>

Bennabi approached the evolution of society from yet another point of view, the psycho-sociological perspective, and introduced the concept of the three ages of society, discussed in the following section.

#### THE CONCEPT OF THE THREE AGES OF SOCIETY

##### (1) Meaning and Characteristics of the Three Ages of Society

Society in its evolution experiences three different psycho-sociological ages of development: the age of objects, the age of people, and the age

of ideas, which are the same stages the individual experiences in his growth from childhood to maturity. In the case of the society, the passage from one age to another is not as obvious as in the individual's.<sup>66</sup>

Bennabi presents a general concept of the dialectic relationship between the realms of people, objects (things), and ideas that gives meaning to the concept of the three ages:

In general, the characteristics of action, both at the individual and collective levels, depend upon the internal relations between the parameters of the cultural world: the objects, the persons, and the ideas whose interference in the society's activities is determined, at any instant, by an internal dialectic that corresponds to its historical stage. Moreover, to every instant corresponds a specific relationship between objects, persons, and ideas integrated in the web of action. Such an instant is but a matter of normality and balance in the course of that dialectic.<sup>67</sup>

Bennabi emphasizes that every society has its own complex cultural universe in which the realms of objects, persons, and ideas are intertwined with the society's concerted action. There is always supremacy of one realm over the other two realms, that manifests itself in behavior and ways of thinking, and through which human societies distinguish themselves.<sup>68</sup>

As such, the society at its first age formulates its judgments and decisions according to the criteria imposed by the realm of objects. Its ideas are centered on the objects. In this age, the nature and quality of judgments are subject to the primitive needs of man and basically relate to the world of his senses, and lie more on the tangible reality that grounds him in the realm of objects (things).

An example in this age is the Arab society before the advent of Islam. It was a small tribal society living in the Arabian Peninsula in a limited cultural universe in which everything was centered on objects. Even beliefs were centered on idols that were inanimate things. The realm of objects itself was very poor, characterized by a nomadic life.<sup>69</sup>

Bennabi argues that human society experiences the age of objects in the pre-civilized and the post-civilized stage. In both, the spirit or

mentality of "thingness" (*chosesisme*) dominates the individual and society. Thus, its culture loses its creativity and dynamism as well as any ability to formulate a new vision. It also becomes a "thingness" culture that centers on objects rather than ideas. In today's Muslim society it has an impact at the psychological, moral, social, intellectual, and political level.

At the psychological and moral level, when the culture is centered on objects, the "object" stands at the top of the scale of values, judgment will be quantitative rather than qualitative, and every thing will be judged by the scale of objects not values.

At the social level, dealing with the quantitative aspects of problems will lead to the formulation of solutions in terms of quantity, and will neglect quality.

At the intellectual level, there are also characteristic symptoms of the "tyranny of things". The author of a book, for example, will not be asked about how any research had been addressed and how it had been treated. Rather, he will be asked about the number of pages, which denotes care about quantity not quality. Sometimes the author himself succumbs to the logic of object-oriented thinking.

At the political level, the "thingness" mentality, i.e., the "tyranny of things", alienates social power in many fields, especially, in the field of planning, when a country faces the problem of underdevelopment, either by means of investing foreign capital or by raising the tax rate in such a way that it paralyzes every private economic activity by laying down the basis for a system of fiscal favoritism in the country.<sup>70</sup>

In its second age, the society forms its judgments according to the standards of a human model or example. It comes from the realm of persons, not that of objects. Here, the person embodies human life because of his position in the human mind. People in this age depend on the human model which provides an authority figure to be followed or imitated. This is the age in which the realm of objects and ideas should go hand in hand with the realm of persons.

Ideas are not free from material embodiment and personification, but a person embodies them. This means that the idea is always associated with the realm of persons.



In this context, Bennabi presents the *Jāhili* (pre-Islamic Arab) society as an example of the centralization of ideas on the realm of persons which was confined to the boundaries of the tribe. The realm of ideas was embodied in those brilliant poems known as the *Mu'allagāt*. In them, the poet gathered his bright verses to celebrate the glories and victories of his tribe or tribal leader, or the chivalry of some members of his tribe. The *Jāhili* society was on the periphery of historical action and out of the current movements of the neighbouring great nations of the Byzantine, Persian, and Ethiopian empires.<sup>71</sup>

In present Muslim society there is an interface between the despotism of objects and that of the persons, and Bennabi argues that it has its harmful effects especially at the moral and political level.

At the moral level, when society attaches its ideal to a person the ideal is personified, and it runs the danger of counting all the mistakes and corruption acts of a that person for the damage to society. This damage takes either the form of rejection of the fallen ideal or that of an apostasy, as it is believed to recompense for the failure by adopting another ideal. The substitution of the problem of persons for that of ideas causes much harm to Islamic ideas represented by people whose qualifications do not live up to them. In this context, Bennabi asks which person can embody ideas without endangering society.<sup>72</sup>

Bennabi mentions that the Qur'an expresses the danger of personification: "and Muhammad is only an apostle; all the [other] apostles have passed away before him: if, then, he dies or is slain, will you turn about on your heels?"<sup>73</sup> This warning does not imply an expectation of error or corruption in conduct which is impossible as far as the Prophet is concerned. Rather, it is a signal and a warning against the danger of the personification of ideas. Therefore, Bennabi sees that this verse was really revealed to be a thrust that pushed forward the primitive society to which it was sent from the age of objects to the age of ideas.<sup>74</sup>

At the political level, the cult of the "providential man" and the "unique thing" manifest themselves everywhere in the present Muslim world. In this regard, colonialism and new-colonialism could exploit this unhealthy trend of ours towards personifying our ideas. This personification sometimes prevents us from benefiting from a failure,

because we trace its causes right back to the "nefarious man" instead of reflecting seriously upon the lessons that can be derived from it.<sup>75</sup>

At the third age, which is of ideas, society reaches its maturity. It enters the civilization stage where ideas become self-grounded and play a leading role in the orientation of society's vocation. Society reaches the point of equilibrium among its realms. Thus, all realms function in harmony.

Objects, persons, and ideas are centred on the original pattern and ideal brought by the religious idea. It is the case of the first Muslim society as it started breaking its tribal frontiers, where each member of the society becomes a bearer of the society's message, and where to build a new cultural universe wherein objects and persons became centred on ideas.<sup>76</sup>

Society revolves around a dominant realm with the characteristics of every age thus, actions, values, and vision are somehow formed on its criteria.

## (2) The Importance of the Concept of the Three Ages

After the considerations on the concept of the three ages, the author believes it can be used as an important tool to measure the movement of society in the course of history, and to measure the leading values of society in a specific moment in time so we know whether the society is in the process of ascent or decline.

Following this notion, the action of society is to be seen as an integrated activity whereby the realm of objects mixes with the two realms of persons and ideas. The structure of this activity, although primitive, encompasses motives and means of execution. In spite of this mixture and interference of the three realms, there is always dominance of one realm over the other two, and this is what distinguishes one society from another in terms of their modes of thinking and behavior.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, the concept of the three ages could be used as a scale to measure the psychosocial maturity of society, the direction of its civilizing process, the organization of its activities, and the transfer of values from one stage to another in the course of history. Furthermore, the domination of one realm over the other two helps to envision the

position in which society is located in its historical movement. Consequently, it will be possible to learn about its accomplishments or resolve its problems.

In other words, the ages represent the social values and cultural surroundings that dominate and influence society at any given moment of its civilizing growth and change. Besides, they reflect the level of consciousness and efficiency of the society.

In a methodological vein, Bennabi directs his analysis to the Muslim world and its leaders, emphasizing its current situation. He places it in the pre-civilized stage where it struggles to enter a new civilizing process. He says that "at the end, the process is locked up and the Muslim society, turning back, finally finds that, centuries ago, it entered the pre-civilized stage [again]."<sup>78</sup>

Accordingly, his diagnosis of the three ages is directed toward intellectual leaders, politicians, and decision-makers in the Muslim world to take adequate action, and to contribute to resolve the corresponding problems, mainly the present dilemma of the backwardness of the Muslim world.

Bennabi was aware that his concept, although mainly directed towards the Muslim society, could be a general psycho-sociological tool to analyze the psychosocial evolution of any civilized society.<sup>79</sup>

Bennabi's interpretation of the movement of civilization undergoes various levels of analysis in order to provide as comprehensive an understanding of the dynamic process of the course of civilization in history as possible. He uses the concepts of the cycle, the three stages, and the three ages which are, in essence, the multi-level analysis of one phenomenon. The following section discusses yet another level of the movement of civilization by looking at the concept of the three states of the social relations network.

#### THE CONCEPT OF THREE STATES OF THE SOCIAL RELATIONS NETWORK

The social relations network, as discussed in Chapter Three, is the minimum set of relations among and within the three realms of society that internally links the components of one realm to one another, and

externally, the three realms to each other. This network gives the realm of persons its pivotal role and coherence. It gives the realm of ideas its efficiency, accuracy, and richness, and, the realm of objects its meaning and usefulness, as well as its real worth.

By peeling away layers of the social relations network as an indicator of change and development in society, Bennabi reveals the structure of yet three states or conditions throughout the historical development of a society: the state of compactness, looseness, and disintegration.

When the social relationships network is in a state of compactness, society reaches its utmost degree of integration and harmony where moral strength and transparency reach their highest level. "This was the case of the Madinah society in Muslim history and of Christian society during the Roman catacombs period"<sup>80</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> century onward). Conversely, the breakdown in the social relations network is an indication of the beginning of devastation or death of a society.<sup>81</sup>

A society's pathology is diagnosed when the network's texture becomes loose in such a way that it is no longer capable of carrying out mutual activity effectively, and a sign that it is on its way to a fatal end. If the network is entirely dissolved, society is declared dead.<sup>82</sup>

Bennabi considers that the study of the states of the social relations network is, in its essence, a study of the society's evolution and function.<sup>83</sup> The state of compactness and firmness reflects effectiveness and vitality in the civilized stage of society. The state of looseness, on the other hand, indicates that the social relations network is no longer able to maintain effective collective action. Moreover, the latter paves the way for the last state, disintegration, which in turn indicates the post-civilized stage.

The development of society in its civilizing process is recorded, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in its social relations network which is an indicator of the stages of society in the course of its history, and an indicator of the age where society is situated in the psychosocial level of its development.<sup>84</sup>

He presents the concept of three states or conditions of the social relations network in order to further understand society's dynamism in its historical evolution through the perspective of the relations in that society.



According to Bennabi, the process of development can be expressed in two different ways: a) quantitatively, by means of an equation that represents the number of relationships involved in the social relations network, and b) qualitatively, through an equation that represents the psycho-temporal level, or the efficacy of this network.

Assuming that the total number of individuals in the society or community is (N), then each individual will be involved in a total of relations equal to (K). The number (X) represents the index of development and evolution from the quantitative point of view. It stands as an indication of the evolution of the society. Therefore, it necessarily oscillates between (1) and (N) or, to put it in an algebraic formula:  $1 < X < N$ .<sup>85</sup>

With all the elements we then obtain the formula  $K = N - X$ . The total number (N) of the individuals who constitute the social network as a whole, including the total number of relations, is (L) as follows:  $L = NK = N(N - X)$ .

The state of the social relations network could be measured based on the value of the variable (X) which gives the total number of social relations according to each state. This will be the subject of the following section.

### (1) The State of Compactness

Bennabi sees that the state of compactness indicated by the equation  $L_1 = N(N - 1)$  denotes that the society has reached the peak of its development. The condition is mentioned by the Prophet in his hadith: "A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other."<sup>86</sup>

This equation shows that  $L_1$  (the number of relations) is at its optimum, society is in its civilizing and spiritual phase where all members of the society are attached to each other. Therefore, the society is in a state of coherence and harmony.

Bennabi refers to the experience of Muslim society in historic Madinah as the model of a coherent society where every member was interrelated with other members of society by means of the brotherhood that the prophet Muhammad established after his migration.

Although the realms of that society were in their preliminary stages of formation, its social relations network was formed as early as the first days of the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madinah.

Contextually, Bennabi argues that any civilizing process commences basically even before its three realms take shape and develop. Society starts its function immediately after the construction of its social relations network, while the realm of ideas is in its simple and preliminary stages, and the realm of objects is still poor and simple. The realm of persons, on the other hand, starts changing and integrating in the new order of relations.<sup>87</sup>

In other words, upon the formulation of the realm of persons, the social relations network starts working, although the other two realms of ideas and objects are still in their preliminary stages of formation. Bennabi also argues that:

Whenever we find, in a given place, at a certain time, an action that constantly integrates human beings, ideas, and objects, this is but an indication that civilization has already started in that specific framework, and that the synthesis thereof has been effectively realized within the realm of persons.<sup>88</sup>

The specific relations within the realm of persons provide the necessary bonds between ideas and objects in the course of the concerted activity undertaken by a society.<sup>89</sup>

The formation of the realm of persons is a precondition for the formation of the social relations network. Here, Bennabi presented an example from the history of Muslim civilization that started developing in history before the completion of its realms of ideas and objects. History tells us that its realm of persons underwent a deep process of transformation that led to the union of the first group of companions who carried out the mission of spreading Islam and paving the way for Muslim society and civilization.<sup>90</sup>

He also added that the function of the social relations network in uniting individuals and groups is expressed clearly, in the case of Muslim society, in their gathering in the mosque for Friday prayer, which serves as a continuous reminder about its birth. Indeed, it is both

its symbol and memory. The memorial and symbolic value of people gathering is a universal phenomenon that exists in all historical ideational societies mentioned in Chapter Two, societies built according to a religious idea or belief-system.

Bennabi's examples show that the emergence of a civilization in history is due to the transformation within the realm of persons which generates the social relations network. Therefore, this process of transformation can be used to indicate the advent or the departure of a civilization.

In regard to a link between the realm of ideas and the social relations network, Bennabi argues that "the wealth of a society can never be measured by the quantity of objects it possesses. Rather, it should be measured in terms of the ideas at its disposal."<sup>91</sup>

Ideas are the real wealth and richness of society, but it has to have control over them, because without control they will lose their orientational character. Thus, the society will not be able to regenerate any civilizing process.

As Bennabi affirms, if difficult and adverse circumstances befall a society, such as a flood or a war that may completely destroy its realm of objects, or may cause a temporary loss of control over it, the disaster would be more devastating had such a society at the same time lost control over its realm of ideas. However, if it succeeds in saving its ideas, it actually saves everything for it will be able to reconstruct its realm of objects.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, the realm of ideas plays the role of protector of society while it has a strong link with the social relations network. This is understood from Bennabi's insistence on society's control of the realm of ideas. To be precise, if society is rich in ideas and is still controlling them and directing them, they will enable the society to regain its dynamic character in periods of hardship and adversity when it loses its realm of objects.

In this context, Bennabi used history to provide an explanation. For instance, during the Second World War, Germany experienced difficult circumstances, as did Russia to a lesser extent, and witnessed the destruction of its realm of objects. However, both were able to reconstruct everything in a short period of time thanks to their stock in the realms of ideas.<sup>93</sup>

The task of reconstruction is undertaken by a society and it is impossible without the existence of a social relations network. This links the members of society to each other, and orients the various activities towards the fulfilment of a common function, which is the specific mission and vocation of that society. The realm of ideas does not function in an isolated manner, because this is not sufficient. Here again, Bennabi points to Muslim society's experience in two different instances.<sup>94</sup>

When Muslim society entered world history in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AC, its realm of ideas was still embryonic and vague compared with civilized societies it invaded and defeated in Egypt, Persia, and Mesopotamia.<sup>95</sup>

Six centuries later, when it began to deteriorate and decline, it had at its disposal the richest libraries of the world at that time. Yet, it collapsed under the blows of new nations such as Spain, whose realm of ideas was relatively poor. Those libraries in fact did not help avoid the defeat.<sup>96</sup>

The realm of ideas alone cannot justify the development or the decadence of civilization. Rather, it needs the harmonious action that incorporates these ideas with the social relations network:

The efficacy of ideas therefore depends upon the social relations network, i.e. we cannot think of a harmonious action incorporating persons, ideas and objects without these indispensable relations. Such an action is effective inasmuch as the network of relations approaches firmness and compactness. Accordingly, if the wealth of a society is to be measured by the amount of its ideas on the one hand, it must also be seen in terms of its network of relations on the other.<sup>97</sup>

This quote reveals an important remark regarding the firmness and compactness of the social relations network. When society is at its stage of development and effectiveness social relations are in a strong state, and they reach their ultimate level of integration and harmony, moral strength and transparency. Conversely, when the social relations network degenerates and is corrupted, the civilization starts to decline and disintegrate.<sup>98</sup>



## (2) The State of Looseness

The first signs of the gradual disintegration process, are noticed in the social relations network:

Before the society is entirely disintegrated, diseases creep into the social body in the form of breaks and ruptures in its social relations network due to both the quantitative and qualitative reasons mentioned above. This pathological situation may last for a long or short time before reaching its ultimate disintegration. Such is the slow process of degeneration as it creeps into the social body. All the causes of disintegration exclusively lie, however, in the social relations network.<sup>99</sup>

The state of looseness is indicated by the following equation:  $L_2 = N(N - X)$ . As  $X$  increasingly approaches equality with  $N$  society is in trouble. The more  $N$  increases the more ruptures and diseases increase in the society.

This equation shows that  $L_2$  (the number of relations) decreases, and society crumbles between the civilizing and decivilizing forces in society. This is the state between compactness and disintegration. If the society can cope with its problems and strengthen its social relations network it will continue its civilizing process. If it cannot, it will follow its course to the decivilizing process, which is disintegration and decline.

## (3) The State of Disintegration

In contrast to the first state, Bennabi says:

[W]hen the society reaches its ultimate disintegration, its social relations network takes the form of the following equation:  $L_3 = N(N - N) = 0$ . This means that the social relations network is dissolved in such a way that it is unable to meet the requirements of any common activity which ultimately becomes impossible.<sup>100</sup>

Here, chaos and anarchy prevail in the society. Such was the state of Muslim society during the era of the petty kings (of Andalusia); the

network was entirely undone, and society was unable to take any collective action.<sup>101</sup>

For Bennabi, that situation might as well be what was alluded to by the Prophet in one of his hadiths:

The people will soon summon one another to attack you as people, when eating invite others to share their dish. Someone asked: "will that be because of our small number at that time?" The Prophet replied: "No, you will be numerous at that time, but you will be scum and rubbish like that carried down by a torrent..."<sup>102</sup>

Bennabi is convinced that the state mentioned by the hadith is not something specific to Muslim society but of every society when the social relations network reaches the state of disintegration. In this state, Bennabi debates, the ego surpasses the conscience and overtakes common interest. Thus, the society enters what can be described as social tragedy.

This state corresponds to the age of things, where society is at its post-civilized stage and man is no longer integrated but disintegrated, and is no longer able to enter dynamic interaction with the other elements or components of civilization.

From the above analysis, we can see how the social relations' network functions as a very crucial tool for examining the entire development of a civilization. The three states of compactness, looseness, and disintegration provide an indicator to determine the stages of development of civilization and society.

## CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter, the author discussed the major concepts in Bennabi's approach to civilization. The focus was from the analytical point of view on concepts that make up the fundamental elements of civilization. Bennabi applied two different, yet closely interrelated mechanisms or levels. The first was an analysis that dissected the phenomena at stake into their basic constituents, with the objective to discover their structure. The second was a synthesis that looked at the

phenomena in the course of their movement and interaction, so as to grasp their dynamics.<sup>103</sup>

The purpose of this chapter was to examine Bennabi's interpretation of the movement of civilization, to follow the level of synthesis to examine the course the movement throughout history, and to see how Bennabi interpreted the various elements of civilization as they work either in their civilizing or decivilizing processes.

The reason for linking these concepts is to discover their interrelatedness as tools to interpret the movement of civilization, and to gain more understanding of the society's dynamism in its historical course from different perspectives or levels.

Talbi mentioned that Bennabi's theory of the cycle of civilization linked with his theory of the three stages and the three ages, and they are all based on a dynamic view of the society's activities during its historical development.<sup>104</sup>

It is very important to see the social relations network's various states that correspond to specific situations society experiences, especially after analyzing its nature in Chapter Two. The history of a society is nothing more than the history of the network of its social relations created in the beginning by a religious idea.<sup>105</sup>

Finally, the points discussed present a multi-level analysis or multi-perspective understanding from different but integrated perspectives of the movement of civilization so that we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the social conditions of humans and the historical movement of society to achieve civilization.

## The Roots of Bennabi's Approach to Civilization: The Internal-Social Dimension

Ritzer defines internal-social factors as those that look within the field of study. But this focuses on social rather than cognitive factors.<sup>1</sup> The main approach here focuses upon the communal (social) aspects of various theories.<sup>2</sup> "The tendency in this approach is to focus on relatively small groups of theorists who have direct links to one another."<sup>3</sup> It includes the efforts to identify the major schools in the history of the field of study. Moreover, it emphasizes the study of ties among groups, as well as a study on theorists themselves to examine their training, their institutional affiliations, their career patterns and their positions within the field of research, etc.<sup>4</sup> in order to identify how these experiences have shaped the theoretical orientation of the theorist. In this metatheoretical dimension, the focus is upon the theorists' background and connections, family and religious ties, intellectual connections with major thinkers, and personal experiences.<sup>5</sup>

Using Ritzer's definition<sup>6</sup> of the internal-social dimension, the focus in this chapter is on the impact of these factors on Bennabi's approach to civilization, on how various circumstances influenced his theorization of civilization and its issues. Bennabi's personal experiences and interests affected his approach, as well as his family, religious, and educational background, and his intellectual pursuits and activism. (life as an activist, and intellectual life) will be examined in this chapter. The author will use various sources to examine his background, but the main source is his autobiography. Ritzer mentions



the importance of autobiography as a metatheoretical tool,<sup>7</sup> and Hankin considers it a means to best view the process of development in the scientists' personality. He says:

A fully integrated biography of a scientist which includes not only his personality, but also his scientific work and the intellectual and social context of his time [is]...still the best way to get at many of the problems that beset the writing of history of science...science is created by individuals, and however much it may be driven by forces outside, these forces work through the scientist himself. Biography is the literary lens through which we can best view this process.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to his autobiography, there is the content of various of his books, the writings of some scholars on the development of Bennabi's approach and the factors that contributed to that development. The author will also consult the books that marked the history of Algeria and the Muslim world in his era.

To draw Bennabi's biographical sketch is difficult because what we know of his life rests on very few sources.<sup>9</sup> His autobiography covers the period from his birth (1905) until 1939, and provides information about his childhood and learning period,<sup>10</sup> which is, to a certain extent, all the information necessary to examine his social circumstances and personal views. This limitation in sources regarding Bennabi's life, particularly the years from 1940 until his death in 1973, can be supplemented by his books that contain, directly or indirectly, some information about events, actions, and factors that affected his theorization about civilization. The same information can be found in his contemporaries' writings and in historical records of his era, such as journals, magazines, and books with the same concern.

## BENNABI'S BACKGROUND

### (1) Family Background

#### (a) Family Structure and Circumstances

Malek Bennabi was born in 1905 in the region of Constantine, east Algeria while it was under French colonization.<sup>11</sup>

His family was poor, like most Algerian native families. However, the imposed poverty did not eliminate the richness of their Islamic traditions which were kept alive and constant. Thus, Bennabi enjoyed an Islamic milieu that formed his personality and provided protection for him and his fellow Algerian Muslims who were facing brutal destruction and annexation of their cultural and civilizational existence by the colonizers.<sup>12</sup>

Bennabi's awareness of the role of the invaders in destroying the Muslim social system in Algeria was thanks to his maternal grandmother who transmitted to her grandson the vivid memories of the first French invasion of Constantine, bequeathed by her own mother. The little child listened intently to the retelling of that tragic period and to the anecdotes told by his grandmother who stressed recompense for good actions and punishment for bad ones, and emphasized charity as the cardinal Muslim virtue. This molded his mind, and decided his future vocation:

In this new milieu, in an extremely poor family I began to recognize my grandmother. I heard many of her narrations and stories which were about the righteous deeds and their reward and bad deeds and their punishments. Indeed those devout stories were formulating unconsciously my personality and throughout them I knew that benediction is in the zenith of the Islamic values and ethics.<sup>13</sup>

Even though she passed away when he was four years old, he could remember the stories she narrated to him along with her daughter (his aunt). With those stories she influenced him and opened his horizons to the importance of Islamic values such as blessings, mercy, oneness of God, charity, and their role in life.<sup>14</sup>

When he was seven years old, he witnessed a collective migration of many native families from Algeria to eastern Arab countries, especially Libya:

I was between six or seven years old. My family's situation was deteriorating, and my grandfather sold the remaining family properties, left colonized Algeria, and migrated to Tripoli with the first wave which

engulfed many cities, such as Constantine and Telemcen. This collective migration reflected the strict refusal of the inhabitants to share life with colonizers.<sup>15</sup>

That was the situation which had a severe impact on Bennabi's family and its structure. The circumstances forced some members of the family to emigrate, some to be poor, and some to be opposed to the colonial rule. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> in colonized Algeria was a critical period and a turning point for Algerians in general, and for Bennabi's family in particular.

Events during that period brought many changes to Bennabi's family and to his personality. Among the changes is the collective migration of some famous Algerian families. Their migration protested the presence of colonizers in their country and evidenced their refusal to share their land and property with the alien invaders. They went to Tripoli to seek a safe place for their property and possessions. Among the emigrants was Bennabi's grandfather when Bennabi was six or seven years old.

This migration, besides social transformations, dramatically changed the structure of Algerian society and the economic status of many families. Algerian sovereignty was demolished, the colonizers took the fertile lands, and the sources of subsistence were tightened. This dramatic situation awakened Bennabi's consciousness and drew his attention to the paradoxes between Algerians and the European settlers, as well as to the changes made by the colonizers to the native society at all levels.<sup>16</sup>

Bennabi experienced the crisis of society's infrastructure, being the Algerian family. During that time, the traditional Islamic environment clearly degenerated, traditional life was disintegrating, and their collective existence was in danger. There was decadence especially in the social and moral aspects, and repression obliged Algerians to either run away from their country or enter a state of self isolation.<sup>17</sup>

Bennabi's family situation clearly increased his awareness of values and the preservation of people's personality at a very early age. He also realized the importance of social relationships both at the micro-level

of the family and the macro-level of the society, even if in a very limited form.

#### (b) *Between the Two Milieus*

Bennabi was born in a setting where two societies cohabited. In these circumstances, he began his first steps of interaction with the social world. At an early age, he confronted two different societies with different levels of development. On the one hand, there was the sedentary colonizer who dominated all aspects of life; on the other, the colonized society that faced a severe situation.

During his travels between Tebessa and Constantine due to the family split, he witnessed two lifestyles and two different societies; he could compare them and pinpoint the differences and the changes between them.

Bennabi also reflected on his personality and thought. In Tebessa, he was influenced by the traditional and Bedouin environment which instilled in his soul the spirit of the man of nature – the man who was not exhausted by the civilized stage. In Constantine, one of the biggest cities in Algeria throughout history, he was attracted by city life.<sup>18</sup>

The two milieus are completely opposite, but both influenced his personality and left their traces upon his thought. Tebessa connected him to his fellow Muslim Algerians and their traditional way of life and culture which traces its roots to Islam and the Muslim civilization with all its glorious past and dramatic present. Constantine, on the other hand, brought to his attention a different culture, the modern lifestyle, thought, and civilization of the colonizers, and provided him with new horizons.

He began to sense for the first time the drama of history, society, and civilization that was to awaken his life-long interest, especially when he enriched his personality by enrolling into two different educational systems, which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

#### (c) *Bennabi's Marriage*

When Bennabi went to France in 1931, he married Khadijah, a French woman who embraced Islam and had a particular impact on his life and thought, on his education and career, and on his orientation in



life.<sup>19</sup> She was of great significance in Bennabi's life. She provided him a familial atmosphere that was both socially and intellectually stimulating. Bennabi anchored himself to the most influential woman in his life after his mother.<sup>20</sup> In his autobiography, he expressed his respect and appreciation for her, and acknowledged her influence on his intellectual development.<sup>21</sup>

She taught him the characteristics, and the values of French society and Western people in general, and motivated him to understand, evaluate, and respond to the spirit of the social and cultural aspects of life in France. Not only that, but she helped him to manage his modest financial resources.<sup>22</sup>

Considerations on the structure and situation of Bennabi's family, his travels, and his marriage to a French woman show the richness of his background and the multiplicity of circumstances that had their impact on his personality and life in this micro level analysis.

## (2) Religious Background

Bennabi's family had strong religious traditions where everything was related to the guidance of religious teachings, and all members of the family contributed to instill Islamic values and beliefs into his soul. One of his colleagues and close friend described him as having "high morality, with a purely Muslim personality, and abiding to Islamic values and morals. He has originality, high aspirations, and high self-esteem, and he has never given up his principles."<sup>23</sup>

Many factors contributed to shaping his Islamic personality and guided his career and quest to overcome the problems of Muslim society and civilization, whether at an early age or in his mature days in France.

### (a) Bennabi's Early Age

In his early years, Bennabi received his religious education and sentiments from various sources. Besides his grandmother's stories mentioned in the previous sections, there were the *zāwiyah*,<sup>24</sup> storytellers in the weekly markets, the Mosque, the *Kuttāb*,<sup>25</sup> and the *Madrasah*.<sup>26</sup>

The role of the *zāwiyah* as a traditional institution played a crucial role in preserving the liveliness of Islamic teachings in periods of bewilderment and doubt after the decline of Muslim civilization. Those *zāwiyah* were important at least in keeping the spirit of memorization of the Qur'an and hadith<sup>27</sup> alive, although there are disputes over their approaches and understanding of Islam.

Bennabi cited the role of the *zāwiyah* in his religious education. Through their well-organized programs and practices he learned certain customs and moral principles associated to traditional life. The *zāwiyah* was established by the Sufi order named *al-Qādiriyyah*, near his parents' house.<sup>28</sup>

Popular stories and *al-hakawātī* (the storyteller) also linked Bennabi's consciousness to the early generation of Islam, and he acknowledged the importance of storytellers in his informal education:

In Tebessa there was another face that represented popular features and appearance. On the days of the public market, I used to go there and listen to *al-hakawātī* who was speaking about the heroic deeds of the early generation of Islam.<sup>29</sup>

Both education and formal Arabic literature suffered deterioration; there was a lack of printed material and other media, so storytellers were the preservers of popular culture. They played a pivotal role in promoting awareness on loss of honor and on the fact that the nation was being humiliated. As described by Bariun, the storyteller's "psychological role [*al-hakawātī*] was very positive for the people, whose Algerian personality was being suppressed, and who were therefore determined to remain 'different' as a symbol of lost liberty."<sup>30</sup>

The mosque also played a crucial role in Bennabi's education. In the mosque people listen to lectures, speeches, and sermons of the Imam.<sup>31</sup> And in this atmosphere Bennabi went to the original source of Islamic culture. He went regularly particularly relishing the Friday prayers.<sup>32</sup> As in all mosques in the Muslim world, there were the *kuttāb* where Muslim children memorize the Qur'an, wholly or partially, as a prerequisite for any Muslim to recite daily prayers and acquire some knowledge of the verses' content.

At the same time he attended the official French school, Bennabi went to the *madrasah* where he was taught Arabic grammar, literature, poetry, as well as jurisprudence, theology, and the biography of the Prophet. In this regard he mentions three of his lecturers that influenced his religious sentiments and instilled in him Islamic principles:

The classes of Shaykh Ibn al-Mawhub in theology, the biography of the Prophet, and those of Shaykh Ibn al-Abid in jurisprudence were strong reminders for my spirit of the pathway. On the other hand, Shaykh Abd al-Majid (1882-1972) was analyzing in his classes some social problems and the corruption of the colonial administration which attracted our support and enthusiasm.<sup>33</sup>

During Bennabi's early years, the book *Risalat al-Tawhid* of the late reformist leader Muhammad Abdu (1830-1905) became famous. It introduced a new methodology of teaching and learning the issues of theology and faith. It opened new horizons of thinking and contemplating on the crucial matters of thought in his generation. Bennabi acknowledged the impact of that book on his thought, alongside "The Moral Decline of Western Policy in the East" (translation mine) by the Turkish reformist author Ahmad Reda (1859-1930):

Both authors influenced the students of my generation and I am indebted to them for the intellectual change which occurred to me since I have read them...I consider them the far reaching sources and determinants of my intellectual tendency.<sup>34</sup>

When Bennabi developed his mature intellectual personality he acknowledged the benefit he derived from those books, although he considered them partial efforts that did not provide a framework for analyzing the totality of the Muslim situation. (For more discussion of this, see the intellectual dimension of the present study in Chapters five and six).

Bennabi's religious background deeply influenced his thinking and his approach to the study of civilization. This is evident in his first published book, *The Qur'anic Phenomenon* and in his concepts of the cyclical movement and the religious idea.

The book, first published in 1947, was his first intellectual work. He attempted a study of the Qur'an from a new perspective to produce an interpretation of its main themes. As a first step in his intellectual career, Bennabi laid down the philosophical and methodological foundations of his later works. He elaborated the general framework of his main ideas and theories on the issues of concern he had studied until then. With the Qur'an he could elaborate his efforts of theorization in different social and cultural fields. In this book, the central thesis on religion guided his analysis of its essence and role in any civilizing process. For him religion is imprinted in the order of the universe as a law that characterizes the human spirit. As he said: "in the light of the Qur'an, religion appears as a cosmic phenomenon, regulating man's thought and civilization as gravity regulates matter and conditions its evolution."<sup>35</sup> In the meantime, the early generation of Islam is present everywhere in his entire opus, especially in the *Milad Mujtama'*, and *Islam in History and Society*.

Consequently, many writers and authors considered Bennabi as a religious thinker faithful to Islamic principles, thought, and way of life. They considered him a Muslim activist thinker and devotee.<sup>36</sup>

However, the previously mentioned sources of religious affiliation may not be enough to reveal Bennabi's religious background without detailing that important part of life he spent in France.

#### (b) Bennabi's Religious Experience in France

Bennabi's religious background mainly intensified in France where he could liberate himself from traditional institutions he considered inadequate to instill Islamic principles in any creative manner, although they provided minimal teaching.

In fact, Bennabi discovered Islam in its universal perspective when he met many thinkers and activists from all over the Muslim world in the Latin Quarter of Paris. He had connections with various people from different religious traditions, and their open discussions about all religions led him to either re-examine his religious understanding, or showed him the consistency of original and logical faith.

His connection with the Christian Unity of Young Parisians challenged his mind and morals to be in accordance with his faith and put



every part of that faith under reasonable examination. This later led him to consider Islam in its entirety as a religion, a way of life, a generator of society, a culture, and a civilization.

Thus, Bennabi considers Islam an integral part of his thinking and theorization, and many concepts in his approach were influenced by his Islamic religious background, especially his concept of causality, the status of man, and the role and function of religion in societal change (more details on his intellectual pursuits can be found later in this chapter).

### (3) Educational Background

Bennabi's educational background leads us to discuss it in five stages; at the *kuttāb*, at the official primary school, at the secondary school in Constantine, during the wandering years, and the French stage at the polytechnic.

#### (a) At the Kuttāb

Although his family was facing financial problems, Bennabi's father sent him to the *kuttāb* at an early age in order to provide him Islamic input and education. After a few years, he did not enjoy attending *kuttāb* classes, not because he was an irreligious man, but because of its method, and the time given to its classes.<sup>37</sup>

The educational problem in the Muslim world, which was in its darkest days, was one of the core problems that concerned Bennabi. It was lacking vision, methodology, means as well as function, especially in Algeria under a colonial rule that adopted the policy of eradication in the religious, social, political, cultural, and economic sectors. In other words, it was civilizational eradication.

The colonial policy of oppression and continuous prevention of the spread of Arabic language and Islamic values prevented Bennabi from continuing in the *kuttāb* because it was not encouraged, so he joined the official school in Tebessa after a short period of parallel involvement in both educational systems.

In fact, the colonial regime sabotaged the *kuttāb*'s programs in matters of human resources and schedules. It did not pay Arab teachers

their salary prevented them from getting private payment from the community, and scheduled classes after working hours. Consequently, they were not attended by many people.

Another factor that contributed to Bennabi's inability to further his studies in both schools was his family's poverty. He describes how his family was not able to pay the Qur'an teacher's fees: "I still remember how my mother once was not able to pay the fees for my teacher of the Qur'an. Therefore, she was obliged to give her wooden bed instead of the monthly tuition fees."<sup>38</sup>

Besides, Bennabi was not making any substantial improvement in his Qur'an studies, even though he had spent four years in the *kuttāb*. As a result, his family decided to send him instead to the official primary school in town.

#### (b) At the Official Primary School

The official primary school selected Algerian children only after a qualifying assessment exam, after which Bennabi was able to join the third level.<sup>39</sup>

Here Bennabi experienced new surroundings, and for the first time studied a new methodology and new subjects. In this juncture, he made a bridge between the two educational systems that instilled in his mind and soul a search for reasons in the decadence of the traditional system and the advance of the modern (French and Western) system of education. The former was in a terrible state. It had already lost its originality, creativity, vision, and methodology that had made it in the past a model for all of humanity, the forerunner in every field of human inquiry, the mold of human character and personality, and the indicator of the Ummah's splendid achievements in culture and civilization.<sup>40</sup> The latter was in its expanding period. It enjoyed developed methodologies, and a clear vision; it gained the protection of the colonial regime and received funds and support. However, it was alien to the civilizational framework of the Muslim because of its secularized vision and westernizing mission.

This dichotomy attracted Bennabi's attention when he joined the French school, and continued to attract his attention throughout his life and intellectual career. In this context, we can understand

Bennabi's idea of orientation which is the essence of the civilizing mission of society. Soon, he realized that the traditional system of education was in twofold backwardness. On the one hand, it was not in accordance with its archetype and model that gave birth to Muslim civilization in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and on the other, it lacked means, tools, methods, and techniques that were developed by modern civilization and are, therefore, worthy to be implemented.<sup>41</sup>

As a matter of fact, in this new atmosphere Bennabi made concrete progress. It was, perhaps, due to the new methodology of teaching he found in the French school and the first contact with European children, as well as the care he enjoyed from his teacher, Madame Bill, whom Bennabi loved and admired so much. "For the first time, in this level I was in direct contact with European children."<sup>42</sup> He improved his performance and mastered the French language which opened new horizons for him of French and Western culture and civilization.

By the year 1914, during the First World War, Bennabi was obliged to return to Constantine to further his studies. He travelled once again to his granduncle's house, and he encountered new members of his family. He met with his grandfather who had just returned from Tripoli and with his uncle Mahmud. This chance gave him another occasion to be acquainted with the nature of big cities like Constantine.<sup>43</sup>

He did not stay long but returned to Tebessa until the end of the First World War. Tebessa was like a cultural center where the generation past and its elements met with the generation of the future and its factors.<sup>44</sup> Unlike Tebessa where change is slow, in Constantine the change was multifold, fast and huge, especially in the structure of traditional culture. It could be seen in the way of thinking, dress, and behavior of the people.<sup>45</sup> One can imagine the impact of the changes in both cities on Bennabi's personality while he was still at an early age.

During the First World War, Bennabi came in contact with American movies shown in Tebessa's cinemas, and experienced the spread of the American lifestyle. Thus, he wrote in his autobiography that the world began to be Americanized.<sup>46</sup>

In the two cities he could witness many events. He was impressed by and acquainted with the interior and exterior political and economic changes that influenced the life of Algerians in general and of his family

in particular. He profited from his travels between the two milieus and regrettably left Constantine, but carried with him one momentous benefit: "I was able to classify things and ideas in my mind and soul."<sup>47</sup> He observed and recorded the changes occurring in the life and thought of people in both European and Muslim Algerian environments, instilling in his mind an understanding of the phenomenon from different angles. Here are two angles used to comprehend the phenomenon of change:

In Tebessa, I observed things from the corner of nature and simplicity, but in Constantine, I observed things from the corner of society and civilization, putting in this expression an Islamic and European context.<sup>48</sup>

These two contexts observed by Bennabi in Tebessa and Constantine have a great impact on the development of some of his concepts regarding the man of nature and the man of civilization. In other words, the man of simplicity and nature who is yet to enter into a new synthesis of civilizing faculties, and the man of the city and civilization who is either in his civilized stage or post-civilized stage. This later stage implies his inability to undertake any civilizing efforts. That is, he is already an exhausted and dissolved man (see Chapter Two).

Bennabi's concern lay mainly with Muslims in Tebessa and Constantine. While the people of Tebessa were more related to the concept of *homonatura*, the people of Constantine were a sample of the dissolved man who lives relying on his heritage. This is true for Constantine's Algerians who were in their post-civilized stage, and were sharing their life with Europeans who brought another civilization in its civilized stage. Western civilization, represented by French presence and rule in Algeria, was in its expanding era. However, the Muslim civilization, represented by Algerian society, was in its state of stagnation, of post-civilization.

*(c) At the Secondary School in Constantine*

By the year 1918, Bennabi returned to Constantine to further his secondary studies.<sup>49</sup> Although he abandoned the religious school in



Tebessa, he joined it again in Constantine informally through his contacts with the reformation movement's leaders, and formally in the school of *Sidī al-Jilī*, which prepares its students for two years to enter the high school of teachers and medical assistants.<sup>50</sup> studied Islamic subjects besides his official classes. At this stage he began a new phase in life, and we can trace his early intellectual links.

Bennabi had two teachers who influenced him in his new school: Shaykh Abd al-Majid (1882–1972) who was a teacher of Islamic courses, and Monsieur Martin who was a teacher of French in the same school. Both symbolized two intellectual circles which reflect two different systems of education. In this context, Bennabi noticed: "Shaykh Abd al-Majid, on one hand, and Monsieur Martin, on the other, formulated in my mind two trends which determined, in the coming years, my intellectual tendency."<sup>51</sup>

In this school Bennabi was eagerly engaged in his studies. He devoted all his faculties to gain as much knowledge as he could from both teachers. He attended Shaykh Abd al-Majid's classes in school as well as in the mosque. He also had strong links with his French teacher who opened his mind to the great works of French and Western authors. He stamped in his soul the desire to read and learn. Bennabi acknowledged the influence of Monsieur Martin on his attitude and performance:

Monsieur Martin was enriching his students with new vocabulary and impressing the taste and art of writing in their souls...He stamped in my soul the taste for reading...Thus he provided me with an opportunity to read every book of Jules Verne (1828–1905), Pierre Loti (1850–1923), Claude Farrer (1859–1952), and others.<sup>52</sup>

His Algerian Teacher, Shaykh Abd al-Majid, put Bennabi in touch with the great classical works of Arabic literature, classical Arabic poems and texts related to the pre-Islamic era, the Umayyad era, and the Abbasid era. Furthermore, he read the literature of modern Arab poets and writers and became acquainted with Jibran (1883–1931) and Ilyā Abu Madhi (1983–1957), Hafiz Ibrahim (1872–1932), al-Rusafi (1875–1945), and al-Manfaluti (1872–1924).<sup>53</sup>

At the same time, Bennabi came in contact with writings from both Western and Islamic intellectuals and scholars. Most likely, his French teacher introduced Bennabi to John Dewey's (1859–1952) *How do we Think?* and *The Social History of Humanity*<sup>54</sup> where Western approaches to cognitive and social matters caught his attention. Bennabi had also read some works of two French converts to Islam: Isabelle Eberhardt's *The Warm Shadow of Islam* and Senator Eugen Jung's *Islam between the Whale and the Bear*.

Also at that time, books of the protagonists of the reformation movement arrived to Algeria, and their impact was present in his way of thinking. He read Abdu's *Risālat al-Tawhīd* and al-Kawakibi's (1849–1902) *Umm al-Qurā*. As well as Ahmad Reda's "The Moral Decline of Western Policy in the East" (translation mine). These books were pioneer in their field, and they not only influenced Bennabi, but many educated people and intellectuals of his time.<sup>55</sup> He also found Ibn Khaldūn for the first time through a French translation of his *al-Muqaddimah*, and discovered the glory of Islamic civilization.<sup>56</sup>

By 1921 Bennabi passed the exam that qualified him to further his high school studies. He became a resident student in his new school, Lycee Franco-Musulman (French-Muslim College). In this new milieu he met many new students from various parts of Algeria and European students. He was also able to contact some students of Shaykh Abd al-Hamid ibn Badis (1889–1940), the founding father and president of the Association of Algerian Muslim 'Ulamā' (Algerian Muslim religious scholars), and the leader and forerunner of the reformist movement in Algeria. It was during this period that Bennabi experienced for the first time new trends of thought from within Muslim intellectual circles. The 'Ulamā' movement was unprecedented in Algerian society in terms of its approach, its method, and way of dealing with the various issues concerning society's reforms.<sup>57</sup>

Bennabi wrote in his autobiography that he spent much time with his colleagues in the cafeteria of Bin Yamina, on the same street as his college, discussing many issues of cultural, religious, and political concern.<sup>58</sup> They exchanged and debated the many issues raised by the newly emerging national Arabic newspapers and magazines.

In that socio-cultural context Bennabi's attention was directed to the efforts in various quarters among Algerians to revive and protect Algerian identity and culture. He was deeply affected by the various aspects of change in Algerian culture and society; everything in this new environment reflected the disintegration of Islamic traditional life and the domination of the French colonial culture and civilization. Therefore, Bennabi, as any Algerian of his generation, felt responsible for that situation. He said, "I was carrying a message for my society"<sup>59</sup> thanks to Ibn Badis whose thought and socio-cultural efforts inspired Bennabi's generation to comprehend the dilemma of Algerian society in its entirety.

(d) *The Wandering Years*

Bennabi graduated from high school in 1925. Now he could either further his studies or find a job in the administration. It was important for him to find a job first, so he travelled to France in the same year with some friends. Unfortunately, after some time working in a number of hard jobs he was convinced he should return to Algeria. He experienced severe financial problems because the labor market did not encourage immigrants who were coming from the colonized countries. So in the same year he returned to Algeria. This time he was considering traveling to Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Australia. He planned to open a business or establish a farm, but all his plans and ideas in this matter remained but a dream.<sup>60</sup> He was unemployed for a few years although he tried to get jobs at local companies or offices. He applied to get a job as a judicial assistant in the Shari'ah court, but his application was rejected because the regulations did not allow natives to work in such administrative positions before the age of twenty-one.

Unlike the citizens, European and Jewish settlers were getting jobs even though they were under twenty-one. Bennabi wrote in his *Mudhakkirāt* the following sad feelings:

I was obliged to remain jobless among the members of my family. I was jobless because of my age, but for every member of the Jewish community of Tebessa in the market there were respected jobs for the Jews whose were younger than me.<sup>61</sup>

To get out of the jobless situation, he sent a letter to one of his friends who worked in the court of Tebessa. He insisted on getting a job even without a salary, to get at least some experience before he reached the legal age. Finally, the court accepted him. Thus, Bennabi immediately started to work with the intention of getting experience in this field before starting official work.<sup>62</sup>

After a few months of volunteer work in the court of Tebessa, he was officially appointed judicial assistant, but this time in the court of Afrou (province in the West of Algeria). This was 1927.

This job offered him yet another means to get in touch with the population and its social, cultural, and family life. In fact, Afrou was another source of knowledge for him about the nature of culture and personality of Algerians:

Afrou was to me similar to a school where I learnt to comprehend the real virtues of the Algerian people whose personality was still original and undamaged. Certainly, that was the feature in other parts of Algeria before the intervention of the colonizers.<sup>63</sup>

In 1928, Bennabi was transferred to Shalghūm al-'Id (city in the east of Algeria). Unfortunately, his new milieu was not motivating. He resigned and look for another job in Tebessa. He started a business with his brother-in-law, but because of the impact of the economic crisis of 1929 the business did not make any progress and, they decided to close it down. This time his family intervened and decided to send him away from that deteriorating situation, back to France again, but this time to further his studies not to look for job.<sup>64</sup>

That decision changed him and the course of his career because it produced one of the few intellectuals of the Muslim world who devoted his life to the study of the causes of backwardness and development. His family's decision to send him was a courageous one since they were in need of every bit of earnings.

(e) *The French Period and its Circumstances*

In 1930, Bennabi arrived in France to further his studies with the intention of joining L'ecole des Etudes Orientales (the School of Oriental



Studies). While he waited for the date of the entrance exam he took the opportunity to visit famous places in Paris, especially the Museum of Arts and Industries that fascinated him.<sup>65</sup>

It was his first encounter with such a huge amount of artifacts of Western civilization all together in one place like members of an orchestra who play the symphony of the Western civilization's achievements.

Those were Bennabi's feelings when he visited the museum. It kindled his quest for issues of civilization; he considered that the museum was the workshop where civilization could be achieved. He wanted to study those achievements and how Western civilization arrived at them. In this circumstance, he began to consider studying science instead.<sup>66</sup>

Waiting for the exam, Bennabi was in a difficult financial situation. As an Algerian living in Paris, it was not easy for him to secure cheap meals and accommodation. He found himself in front of the office of the Christian Unit of Young Parisians organization which provided for its members cheap meals and easy access to books and journals for their studies. When he applied to join the organization this was his first moral test in this new context, to get involved with an organization that contradicted some principles of his faith.<sup>67</sup>

In his autobiography he described his feelings: "these moments represented the first moral and ethical test I faced in this new milieu."<sup>68</sup> He was the first Muslim from a colonized country to become a member in that Christian organization.

This source contributed considerably to determine his lifelong career and guided him to take into consideration some features of Islam he would never have seen before. In this organization, Bennabi felt spiritually nourished. His exposure to new ways of thinking revealed sides of his Muslim spirit he had never experienced before, shaped his ability in social analysis, and implanted in his mind the seed of philosophical reflection.<sup>69</sup> He also became acquainted with many new ideas of world religions and Western civilizations. He was impressed by programs and activities organized by that organization, even though he was not comfortable with its belief in the Trinity.<sup>70</sup> On this point Bennabi said, "my soul and mind, which believe in one God, were not able to hold the concept of Trinity in which my colleagues in

the organization believed."<sup>71</sup> In spite of his difference in belief, he was involved in the activities of the organization and benefitted from all sources without fear of assimilation or feeling of alienation; his spiritual development and his conscience were opened to comprehend new matters that would govern all his future life.<sup>72</sup>

Bennabi's involvement in the activities of the Christian organization put him in touch with the vivid spirit of Western civilization. The close relationship with his colleagues made him live the inner dynamism of French families and society when he was able to experience that only externally in Algeria. In other words, his intellectual and social connections with his colleagues enabled him to discover the spiritual aspect of that society which he could not see in the colonial frame in Algeria. Regarding his visits to French families with his colleagues in the organization, Bennabi stated:

My visits to French families with my friend showed me the essence of European life from its interior. In these family contacts I understood many things which I could not comprehend when I was in Algeria. In Algeria, I was looking at things from their exterior and superficial appearance. My activities and relations from within the organization enabled me to realize the spiritual and moral dimensions which I lack totally in the colonial frame.<sup>73</sup>

He attributed his compliance with his new milieu to that organization: "Perhaps the reason for my harmony with the new milieu in France was because of the help of the organization."<sup>74</sup>

Before the date of the examination to enter the School of Oriental Studies Bennabi was sure that he would pass. Unfortunately, his application was unsuccessful and he did not get in. He did not trust the fairness of the results, so he decided to sit for the exam again. At his insistence to join the school, the Director explained that his application was unacceptable. Then he realized "that the admission to the School of Oriental Studies does not subject an Algerian Muslim to a scientific measure, but to a political one."<sup>75</sup> The mission of that institution was to study the colonized countries and their natives; hence a native such as Bennabi was to be excluded from methods developed by the colonizers

and their allies – the Orientalists – that could enable the natives to be participants rather than subjects, as they wanted him to be.

(f) *At the Polytechnic*

After his fruitless efforts to join the school, and upon the advice of one of his colleagues in the Christian organization, Bennabi decided to join the Polytechnic Institute.

Here again, he found himself in a new situation that made him read heavily. To prepare for the Institute exam that focused on mathematics Bennabi was obliged to take additional courses to strengthen his knowledge of the required subjects. In conjunction with that, he found a series of books under the title *Pour Comprendre* (to understand) that included various fields of knowledge, and was prefaced and published under the supervision of a priest named Father Morro. A new world opened up for Bennabi, and he wanted to seriously study the subjects, read and ask about everything, trying to understand everything related to mathematics, geometry, electricity, physics, and mechanics.<sup>76</sup>

He passed the exam and enrolled in the Polytechnic, which completely changed his academic direction<sup>77</sup> but not his main objective to study the causes of backwardness of the Muslim world. In this school, Bennabi found himself gaining new knowledge, new methods, and new thinking based mainly on the precision of the technical sciences and mathematical logic.<sup>78</sup> While the Christian organization offered him one aspect of Western society, the Polytechnic and his study of engineering opened for him the gates of science and scientific methodology that enriched his thinking and systematized it.

The two institutions linked him to the background of Western civilization where civilizing values develop, and to the dynamism of the Western mind in terms of its achievements in science and technology. Thus he could use two approaches to understand the internal dynamism of Western civilization in its civilizing values, in addition to his approach to it externally, as he experienced it in the context of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in Algeria and in other colonized countries. Bennabi described his situation in the following revealing statement:

I began my work with great compassion similar to that of a man who wanted to convert to a new religion. Therefore, this period of my study was not confined to preparing me to enter the Polytechnic, but also it changed radically my intellectual direction. It inspired in my soul the love of knowledge. The books of Father Morro did not only open to me the doors of the new school, but also the doors of a new world whose every thing was a subject to the exact standards of how and how much. Man in this standard featured by the character of accuracy and observation. It was through this means that I began my contact with Western civilization once again, after my first contact with it through the Christian Unit of the Young Parisians.<sup>79</sup>

In his new school, Bennabi began not only to extend his interest in studying science, but to contemplate various issues related to his colonized society. He became gradually concerned about the stagnation of Muslim society in Algeria and in the world at large. Moreover, he became more and more convinced about the role he had to play and the task he had to begin in order to contribute to, if not carry on the responsibility of resolving the various problems of the Muslim world.

Bennabi felt the weight of responsibility for that situation and had to gain knowledge to get rid of it:

I intended to acquire knowledge intensely similar to someone who saw every kind of ignorance and all sorts of degeneration in his society as his own responsibility. So, nobody could sacrifice himself to resolve that if he does not believe, in one way or another, that he is the saviour sent to his society... That was my feeling since I joined the new school.<sup>80</sup>

Clearly, his engineering background had a direct effect on the shaping of his realm of ideas, his critical thinking, and concept of the Muslim world.<sup>81</sup> It also guided his thinking to go beyond the manifestations of any phenomenon. While he was a student at the Polytechnic, Bennabi met Hammudah Bessai, an Algerian student of philosophy at the Sorbonne, and a person who played an important role in leading him to be specialized in the affairs of the Muslim world and the issues of civilization. Bessai was preparing a doctoral dissertation in



philosophy under the supervision of the well-known French orientalist Louis Massignon (1883–1962) about al-Ghazālī (450–505 AH/1058–1112 CE), the great Muslim theologian, jurist, philosopher, logician, educator and mystic.<sup>82</sup>

Bennabi was grateful to Benssai for teaching him the social and philosophical dimensions of the issues they discussed. Therefore, he said: "I am greatly indebted to Hammudah Benssai in my tendency as a specialized author in the affairs of the Muslim world."<sup>83</sup>

Through those open discussions with his friend and teacher Bennabi developed some of his concepts. He mentioned his concern about analyzing the causes of the backwardness of the Muslim world, as well as observing the different trends of thought related to the same matters.<sup>84</sup>

Bennabi graduated in 1935 as an electrical engineer from the Polytechnic but never practiced. Instead, he practiced a kind of "ideas engineering," a concern since his early years that dominated his thinking and determined his career path.

To sum up his educational background, it seems that all those institutions, i.e., the *kuttāb*, *zāwiyah*, the *madrasah*, the French school of Constantine, the Christian Unit for Young Parisians, and the Polytechnic, shaped his personality, endowed him with rich experiences, and provided various sources of education. They also opened his consciousness toward many issues related to his nation's situation and guided his career to be focused on providing a theoretical as well as a practical model to resolve the state of backwardness of his society. Bennabi's life did not stop after graduating as an electrical engineer.

He was involved in many activities and in intellectual circles that played a pivotal role in giving his thinking a more practical aspect, and making him revise some of his ideas in light of daily experience. In this regard, two factors contributed to the formation of his idea of civilizational reform and developed his approach to civilization studies, these being his background and his connections.

Bennabi's background, his situation as a citizen of a colonized Algeria, his experience in both educational systems, his belonging to the indigenous people on the one hand, and his contact with the European colonizers on the other, all directly contributed to shape his ideas about the colonized and the colonizer and the concept of

"colonizability" as a tool to analyze the psychological situation of today's Muslims.<sup>85</sup>

His idea of orientation was the result of experience with the social life of Algerians in Algeria and France, and of Muslims in general. Bennabi introduced his concept of "orientation" of thought, work, and wealth in order to place the realms of persons, ideas, and things in a dynamic relationship instead of stagnation and passive existence.

He formulated the notion of "orientation" perhaps because of his experience in the traditional system of education. He was of the view that the system had lost its originality and lacked the methods, the techniques and the ideas that could make it contribute to the rise of a new generation who could tackle the various problems in the Muslim world and put them into a general framework able to diagnose the symptoms of the present state of Muslim civilization.

Bennabi's functional concept of civilization seems to be due to his long experience on different problems in Algeria and France. He faced difficulties in finding a job, working, furthering his studies, supporting his family, etc. because there was no strong society to back him up, to carry out his responsibilities, and to live a respectable life in a minimum of decorum.

For Bennabi, the happiness of the individual is not a personal matter but a social one. The more the individual is attached to civilized society, the more he finds the necessary requirements guaranteed for him. On the contrary, as an Algerian during Bennabi's time, and maybe up to the present, the characteristics of anyone who is attached to society who does not provide or ensure those necessary requirements, do not help him to enjoy a comfortable status.<sup>86</sup>

Bennabi's background and social life among Muslims of his generation made him focus on the role of society. He emphasized the concept of civilization as the moral and material conditions which grant to a given society the ability to offer social assistance to its members. Civilization is:

the overall result of the moral and material conditions which grant a given society the possibility to offer each one of its members, at every stage of his existence from childhood till the afterlife, the necessary

social assistance required for his development at this stage or at the other.<sup>87</sup>

It develops the individual and society because the individual does not provide those aspects for himself.

Through his background he could understand how the absence of civilized society prevented individual Muslims from enjoying an honorable life like others, although they had all the capabilities and faculties to enjoy such a status. Consequently Bennabi considered society the core force in any civilizing process because it provides the individual with the necessary assurances for his progress and prosperity.

### INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS

While the preceding analysis dealt with Bennabi's background, this section is going to deal with his intellectual pursuits which include Bennabi's life as an activist, and his intellectual links with various circles, schools and paradigms of thought.

Thirty years in Europe, facilitated by his fluency in French and his love of reading and contemplation, gave Bennabi a golden opportunity to deepen his knowledge of European thought, particularly on social and political issues. As a result, he raised his intellectual and political awareness, and his interest shifted from engineering to philosophy and the social sciences. He became increasingly involved in the reformist movement, writing, contributing to the issues of reform and renewal of Muslim civilization, and making links with various intellectual quarters to deepen his understanding of the situation of the Muslim world during his time.

#### (1) The Activist Life

Along with his stages of education, Bennabi became increasingly involved in many activities regarding the reformation movement, the decolonization movement, and the efforts of revival in Algeria and the Muslim world. He had many connections with various thinkers, schools of thought, and activist movements.

In fact, many writers and thinkers considered him an intellectual and acknowledged his activist life. For Esposito, Bennabi was a "twentieth-century Muslim activist and nationalist leader in the *Maghrib* (North Africa) side by side with Ibn Badis."<sup>88</sup> On another occasion Esposito described him as a "Muslim scholar-activist."<sup>89</sup> This view is shared by Ukashah, Bariun, and others.<sup>90</sup>

To gain an in-depth understanding of Bennabi's thought and activities to which he adhered from an early age, and their impact on his personality, notions, and approach to civilization, historical methodology becomes a tool for an analysis of the development of his activist life, and may help to clarify the main ideas he formulated from varied experiences. The following section describes his activist life in three stages: early activities, activities in France, and activities in Egypt and independent Algeria.

#### (a) Early Activities

At an early age, Bennabi encountered many changes in Algerian society that involved him in discussions with his colleagues. His work in the Shari'ah court in the rural area of Aflou, and his direct contact with Ibn Badis's students increased his awareness about the role he had to play to contribute to reforming his country. He developed rich experience and knowledge about the dynamism of societies, and witnessed the degeneration of traditional institutions in Algerian society not only because it was under the attack of colonizers, but also because traditional institutions could not cope with the changing character of society. For Bennabi, weakness from within was the primary cause, second to the deconstructing role of colonialism.

The author agrees with Kepel's claim that Bennabi's concern was to examine from within the causes of the weakening of Muslim civilization, which he termed "colonizability."<sup>91</sup> With his background and experience in social institutions like the *madrasah*, the *kuttāb*, and others he developed this term which denotes the internal causes of backwardness and the decline of Muslim civilization. It also denotes that colonization is a mere result of colonizability.

During his school days he was confronted with many ideas. Besides the changing situation of Algerian society under the colonizers, he



became aware of the growing misery of the Algerian people. His sentiments and ideas became increasingly more reasonable during the frequent discussions in the Café Bin Yamina where he met his colleagues and students of Shaykh Ibn Badis to exchange ideas and gain insight.

The experiences he faced in different stages of his early years directed his concern towards a search for the causes of decline and regeneration of societies and civilizations.

#### (b) Activities of the French Period

Although Bennabi was academically qualified as an electrical engineer,<sup>92</sup> he never practiced that profession but devoted the rest of his life to the question of underdevelopment.<sup>93</sup> He spent more than thirty years learning philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, and other social sciences to understand the phenomenon of the rise and decline of societies and civilizations from different points of view; he observed social events and watched and contributed to the dynamism of civilized European society. He was also involved in the political activities of North African students and politicians, and had strong connections with various sectors of anti-colonialism from Africa, the Arab world, and Asia.

As an Algerian student in Paris during 1930s, Bennabi became acquainted with circles of thinkers and communities of the same concern within the Latin Quarter.<sup>94</sup> He became more aware of the political movements in colonized countries, and more and more involved in discussing the problems of colonized Algeria and other Muslim countries that were live issues among his peers.

In this period, Bennabi became a reformist and an anti-Sufism activist. He became aware of the importance of the 'Ulamā' movement and its teachings, and propagated the ideas of *islāh* (reform), *Maghrib* (North Africa) unity, and any banner that denoted and reflected Islam and the reformist movement.<sup>95</sup>

Cartesian ideas also shaped thought and culture of the educated French elite, and formed the mindsets of most intellectuals. Bennabi was under the influence of the ideas of *islāh* that were attacking the superstitions of some Sufi orders, and of Cartesian ideas heard at the

Polytechnic. Consequently, Bennabi became an anti-Sufism and anti-superstition activist.<sup>96</sup>

The Latin Quarter kept him aware of the Algerian situation from both the perspective of the painful side of colonization in Algeria, and the optimistic side of reform and liberation. He kept a strong moral and spiritual relationship with his country and propagated the ideas of reform, nationality, and speaking openly against the settlers.<sup>97</sup>

His involvement in many political and social activities saw him as member and participant in the activities of the Maghrib Students Association in the Latin Quarter of Paris since 1931 where he gave his first public lecture entitled "Why are we Muslims?" For his anti-colonial activities he was questioned by the French police and came under its continued surveillance, and his family began to suffer interference from the colonial regime.<sup>98</sup>

When he visited Algeria in 1932, he found a new atmosphere of activities and movement evolving around ideas of reform and the political actions of several groups among the natives. In particular, the 'Ulamā' began a reviving process to protect the identity of and implement the preliminary elements for a free and independent Algerian society.

For Bennabi, the 'Ulamā's objective to establish schools, mosques, and clubs was the right starting point for reforming society and reactivate civilization.<sup>99</sup>

Thus, he became more involved in its activities and showed his support for the Association of the 'Ulamā', although he was not an official member. When he returned to France the same year, he was optimistic about the future of Algerian society. He was impressed by the 'Ulamā's reformist movement which focused on changing the mindsets of Algerians, and was undertaking the long-term project of changing the worldview perception of them.

What he saw in his visit to Algeria convinced him about the importance of educational and cultural activities over political activism. The 'Ulamā' considered their efforts a duty that needed to be carried out, so they did not wait for wage or rewards or material benefits. On the other hand, political activists considered their efforts rights that were due them. Bennabi concluded that politicians were exploiting the

people's ambitions instead of preparing them to take their responsibility in defending the Algerian identity and independence. In contrast to politicians, the intellectuals (the '*Ulamā*') were the generators of ideas that the Algerian society was in need of.<sup>100</sup>

For Bennabi, a sound thought is that which sees the formulation of a civilization as a social phenomenon engraved in the same conditions and circumstances that witnessed the birth of that civilization in the first cycle.<sup>101</sup> Those conditions were the intellectual ideas the '*Ulamā*' were promoting.

Returning to the Latin Quarter, he continued his role as an activist by giving lectures, writing articles, and participating in various circles, especially with his friends in the Christian Unit of the Young Parisians and the Maghrib Students Association.<sup>102</sup> This shows that he was not an anti-Christian activist or a religious fanatic, rather, an anti-colonial activist. His religious background allowed him to be open-minded about cooperating with people from different religions and ideologies. His understanding of the Qur'an and Islamic principles taught him to be friendly to all people, including scholars, political leaders, and personalities from such places as the Arab world, China, Vietnam, Africa, and Latin America, and European and Jewish students.<sup>103</sup>

During this period he met Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) when he visited Paris in 1932 and delivered a lecture organized by the Maghrib Students Association on the issue of colonization.<sup>104</sup>

In 1935, after he graduated as an electrical engineer, he wanted to travel to Saudi Arabia to be in touch with the idea of *islāh*, to Egypt to further his studies at Al-Azhar University, and to Afghanistan, Sudan, Italy, or Australia to settle and work, but all those attempts were unsuccessful.<sup>105</sup>

At the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, he returned to Algeria but found that it was impossible for him to stay there. So he returned to France disappointed and sad.<sup>106</sup> He joined the well-known French newspaper *Le Monde* (The World) as a journalist. During this period he began writing his first book on the issues of civilization and the renaissance in the Muslim world.<sup>107</sup>

Besides the activities in the Maghrib Students Association, Bennabi was also involved in the political activities of North Africa by contact with some North African politicians.

All these experiences convinced him that the revival of the Algerian nation and the Muslim Ummah and civilization is not as straightforward as different trends of thought. It is also not like what was being propagated by politicians in their own desire for temporary victory in elections and governance while they undermined their people's real situation of backwardness. He was of the view that the political approach is mere exploitation of the situation by fanatical and pragmatic politicians. Its focus on rights rather than duties surfaced and transferred the issue from its dynamic character to a political agenda limited to political independence. On the other hand, politicizing the issue of backwardness seemed to Bennabi to be an expansion of one aspect of the issue over the other aspects.

Political activists of his time were blaming the colonizer while ignoring the spirit of colonizability in the souls of the colonized people. Thus, Bennabi considered that the positive step was not to keep insulting the devil or begging for rights, rather, to acknowledge the internal causes of the decline, and to view colonization as a mere results of our own vulnerability to be colonized.<sup>108</sup>

No political agenda can be successful unless there are grounds for it, so the '*Ulamā*' were involved in changing ideas, mindsets, intellectuality, and the ways of tackling matters through their educational programs of reform and *islāh*.

They were the only school that adopted a clear and consistent paradigm, and approached the issue in a constructive and comprehensive way. However, the '*Ulamā*' did not remain faithful to their approach when they failed to keep their vision: they undermined their role and gave up the leadership of society to politicians. They were also involved in politics and quit their original mission of education and intellectual reform.<sup>109</sup>

The French police heavily harassed Bennabi as he increased adherence to the ideas of *islāh* and with various anti-colonial factions. He felt that his stay in France was no longer beneficial for his agenda, especially after he published his first book. Therefore, he decided to find a safe place where he could further his mission of reform and civilizational revival and publish his books in Arabic for Arab intellectuals whom Bennabi considered his main audience.<sup>110</sup>



When the revolution for an independent Algeria began in 1954, he joined the struggle. After several attempts, he managed to escape to Egypt from his imprisonment in France.

(c) *Activities in Egypt and in Independent Algeria*

In 1956, Bennabi went to Cairo where he settled until Algeria regained its independence in 1962, after 132 years of "destructive" French occupation that led the Algerian people to pursue a deadly fight against the colonial power in order to be liberated from its domination.<sup>111</sup>

As a political refugee in Egypt, Bennabi experienced a historical shift and a new phase in which he established connections with people that varied from political leaders, to religious scholars, to university students.

Ever since his early days in France, he had been looking for an opportunity to establish connections with intellectuals and traditional institutions like Al-Azhar University in order to deepen his knowledge and spread his ideas. Egypt was the heart of the Muslim world during his time in terms of its intellectual role and religious importance, and in terms of its newly founded Pan-Arab government and political elite. It was also the first Arab country to openly support the Algerian revolution of liberation and became a safe haven for Algerian nationalists.<sup>112</sup>

Bennabi clearly expressed his agenda saying that he had gone to Egypt for two objectives: to publish his books and introduce them to the Arab readers, and having been an Algerian militant who had spent twenty-five years struggling against colonialism, to continue his struggle side by side the leadership of the Algerian revolution in Egypt.<sup>113</sup>

In Cairo he translated his French books *Le phénomène coranique*, *Les conditions de la Renaissance*, *Vocation de l'islam*, and *Réflexions sur la société arabe* into Arabic, and published them. In addition, he published *S.O.S Algérie* (1957), to explain the Algerian issue to the intellectuals, and *L'Afro-Asiatisme* (1958) which considers the theoretical framework of African and Asian people in their struggle for liberation and civilizational reformation.

His fresh ideas and unprecedented approach to the affairs of development and reformation earned him a prestigious position among Egyptian intellectuals regardless of their affiliation or ideological

camp. He redirected their focus to issues of civilizing renewal and renaissance in the Muslim Ummah, as well as the pre-eminence of intellectual matters over other matters related to the Ummah's situation.

The newly formed Egyptian pan-Arab government of "Free Officers" welcomed him, and he established some intellectual circles in which many university students and intellectuals from various parts of the Muslim world contributed to the translation and dissemination of his ideas.<sup>114</sup>

Bennabi easily understood their need for a framework as a starting point. Therefore, he dedicated his *Fikrat al-Ifriqiyyah al-Asyawiyyah* (Afro-Asiatism) to the Egyptian government and to the nationalist governments of the developing world as a contribution to the efforts of formulating a new paradigm in international relations.

In acknowledgement of the importance of his ideas, he was appointed counsellor to the Islamic Conference by the Egyptian government, and member of the Islamic Research Academy in Cairo.<sup>115</sup> He participated in all Islamic conferences during those years and showed enthusiasm, vigor, depth, and sincerity.

In 1959, he visited other countries such as Syria and Lebanon. He met more scholars, delivered more talks in cultural centers and universities, and participated in many seminars in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Tripoli.<sup>116</sup> They were all opportunities to introduce himself and his ideas to the Arab world.

Bennabi's activist life did not end with the political independence of Algeria from French colonization on July 5, 1962 but took on a more intellectual focus. When he returned to Algeria in 1963 he resumed the intellectual activities he had pursued in Cairo but the new post-colonial populist regime ignored his insistence on a clear project of reform after Algeria's 132 years of hostility and hegemony in the so-called French *mission civilisatrice*. Thus, he encountered opposition from the government and Socialist and Marxists allies.<sup>117</sup>

His contributions to the reform of newly independent Algeria could not find much official acknowledgement. However, he furthered his intellectual efforts with the help of his students and some of his friends, and published more books. Upon his return from the long exile in Egypt in 1963, he co-founded the non-governmental association

*Jam'iyyat al-Qiyam al-Islamiyyah* (Association of Islamic Values) with some of his colleagues and the remaining members of the 'Ulamā' that he founded that lasted until 1966 when it was banned by the then Algerian Socialist regime.<sup>118</sup>

His appointment in 1965 as Director of High Studies at the Ministry of National Education brought him closer to decision makers who helped instill some of his ideas in the political elite of that time.<sup>119</sup> Despite that, he resigned from his post in 1967 to be free from his official duties and to focus on establishing a network of intellectuals which comprised Muslim intellectuals from various countries and backgrounds.<sup>120</sup> He also established what was known later on as the Annual Conference of Islamic Thought which lasted until 1989.

By 1971, Bennabi culminated his active life by performing a pilgrimage to Makkah, and then visited certain Arab countries where he met his friends and students.<sup>121</sup> On October 31, 1973 Bennabi died in Algiers and left an inestimable legacy that revolves around "the problems of civilization," the legacy of the greatest Muslim thinker Algeria has ever produced in modern times.<sup>122</sup>

The connections he made will be discussed in the next section as determined by *Mu* in its internal social dimension.<sup>123</sup>

## (2) Intellectual Connections

The focus of this examination is on the groups of thinkers who had direct links with Bennabi and who may have influenced the formulation and development of his approach to the study of civilization.<sup>124</sup> The discussion of these connections will be at the social level, while the intellectual level will be discussed in Chapters six and seven.

During his studies in France in the '30s, Bennabi was involved in many activities and became convinced that it is important to develop teamwork and strong links with intellectuals of both Muslim and the developing world to tackle the complicated matters of underdevelopment. However, he acknowledged that Muslim intellectuals lack the connectedness with each other and do no collective work. In this regard, he said "I was not aware at that time [1930's] that the collective

work and its results are among the fundamentals the Muslim World has missed and has not yet regained, especially its intellectuals."<sup>125</sup>

Bennabi was concerned with establishing a tradition of connection among intellectuals, so he endeavored to get close to many circles of thought, and to become part of certain organizations. He also supported some movements and trends he found close to his ideas.

### (a) Connections with the 'Ulamā' and the Reformists

Bennabi's strongest links were with the reformist movement in the Muslim world represented by the 'Ulamā'.

In his autobiography he mentions several times his strong relationship with most of its members, thinkers, and scholars who had similar concerns, and his involvement in its activities in Algeria and France where he was a supporter of *islāh*, reformism.<sup>126</sup>

At an early age he was attracted by 'Ulamā's reform movement and was impressed by Ibn Badis's students who represented for Bennabi a new model of the religious scholar who combines religious originality and the activist life of the early Muslim generation. The 'Ulamā' were a circle whose long chain of scholars and thinkers dated back to Ibn Taymiyyah (661–728 AH).<sup>127</sup>

Bennabi pointed to Shaykh Abd al-Majid, Ibn al-Mawhub, and Ibn Mhanna as the early predecessors of reformism who paved the way for the 'Ulamā' to further their mission in the intellectual-religious movement.<sup>128</sup> He considered them the link between the reformation movement of the East and that of Algeria. They were the initiators of the movement in 19<sup>th</sup> century Algeria.<sup>129</sup>

Ibn Badis was a famous reformist and leader of the 'Ulamā' association who had a great impact not only on Bennabi, but also on all Algerians who considered him the promoter of Algerian identity in modern times. Through his efforts of reform and education, he was able to maintain the Islamic identity of the Algerian people against the French colonial plan of cleansing and annexation.

Bennabi's loyalty to Islam, to the early generation of Islam, his pan-Islamism and his admiration of Ibn Khaldūn are all due to his relationship with Ibn Badis and the 'Ulamā'. The result of his close links with them and his knowledge of their teachings<sup>130</sup> engendered in



Bennabi strong opposition to the deviationist Mystic orders and to materialist thought.

'*Ulamā's* educational and cultural philosophy and activities influenced Bennabi in such a way that he considered himself a member of that group although he never officially joined.<sup>131</sup> His concept of the pre-eminence of ideas in changing the historical situation of people was due to the influence of the '*Ulamā's* philosophy whose strategy was emphasized by Ibn Badis:

The critical situation of Muslims cannot be reformed unless their scholars are reformed. Those scholars cannot be reformed unless their education is reformed. And their education cannot be reformed unless it traces back its origin and roots to the teachings of the Prophet and his guidance.<sup>132</sup>

Therefore, the '*Ulamā*' focused on the revival of the teachings of Islam and Arabic language, and increased the importance of Islam as part of the Algerian identity.<sup>133</sup>

During the '30s, Bennabi had contact with some members of the '*Ulamā*' Association. He enjoyed good friendships, especially Shaykh al-Uqbī, Shaykh al-Ibrahīmī (1889–1964), Tawfiq al-Madani, and others.<sup>134</sup> However, his close relationship with the '*Ulamā*' made him critical of their attitudes. From his links with them he was able to observe two problems among the intellectuals, in general, and the '*Ulamā*', in particular.

First, he discovered the inferiority complex of Algerian intellectuals, whether traditionalists or modernists, compared to other intellectuals. While the traditionalists felt inferior to the intellectuals of the Arab East, the modernists felt second-rate when faced with Western intellectuals in general, and the French in particular. Bennabi extended his observation to all intellectuals of the Muslim world in modern times who have that inferiority complex towards Western culture. Thus, he reached the conclusion that "it is a general phenomenon; each society that has lost its civilization will lose any originality in thought and action when faced with the ideas of others."<sup>135</sup>

Second, at the Islamic conference held in Paris (1936) in which all the parties of the Algerian National Movement met, Bennabi mentioned the inadequacy of the '*Ulamā*' to carry out the responsibility with which the Algerian people had entrusted them. Although the '*Ulamā*' were the most trustworthy and the most capable of fulfilling it, they handed it over to pragmatist politicians. Therefore, from the civilizational point of view, those intellectuals of traditional culture (the '*Ulamā*') were not able to accomplish their important mission in history because there is a part of the framework that was formed under the influence and traditions of *al-Muwahhid* era, the post-civilized stage of Muslim civilization where its members lose any creativity and originality.<sup>136</sup>

Bennabi's previous critiques of the efforts of the '*Ulamā*' did not prevent him from acknowledging their creative way of reform. They made him aware of the importance of the notion of "orientation" discussed in Chapter Three.

He was influenced by their activities and vision, and by their focus on changing the human soul before changing the surroundings. Bennabi was of the view that the '*Ulamā's* was the right way to begin the civilizing process because they start by changing the ideas and the mindsets of the people. The '*Ulamā*' focused on the purity and preservation of Islamic teachings, they summoned up the experience of the early generations of Islam, and they cared about changing souls and mindsets from their post-*al-Muwahhid* culture to a new culture. This excited Bennabi who considered the '*Ulamā's* way of tackling the situation of reform was the input for the new civilizing process.<sup>137</sup>

#### (b) Connections with Early Muslim Scholars

Bennabi was also influenced in vision and ideas by some early Muslim scholars and writers such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldūn, who produced various volumes of works on Muslim social history, culture, civilization, and entertained various issues of the same concern as Bennabi's treatise.

Unlike al-Ghazālī who was a mystic, Ibn Taymiyyah tackled the issues of his time; he was a *mujāhid* (fighter for the sake of God living as he did during the Mongol invasions) who called for a spiritual and

social revival in the Muslim world. His efforts resulted in the establishment of the *al-Muwahhid* dynasty, and later on, the emergence of the movement *Wahhābiyyah*<sup>138</sup> which Bennabi traces to Ibn Taymiyyah.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), in Bennabi's view, made a great contribution to the reformation movement. He was the founder of the *Wahhābiyyah* movement which focused its efforts on purifying Islam from all innovations which had infiltrated into the religion during the later history of Islam. The *Wahhābiyyah* strongly attacked the cult of saints' worship which Sufism has promoted throughout time, and considered such acts as polytheism and infidelity. This attitude was of great significance to Bennabi and to Algerian reformism for its struggle against all myths, stray sects, and practices.<sup>139</sup> The latter had its promoters like al-Afghani and his friends who carried its ideas.

Bennabi considered himself a product of that chain of reformers starting with Ibn Taymiyyah. Therefore, he made connections with the promoters of the modern reform movement in the Muslim world. He mentions Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, al-Afghani, Abdu, and Reda, as well as Arslan in *Mudhakkirāt Shāhid li al-Qarn* and his other early books, and benefitted from various sources besides the scholars and thinkers mentioned.

Although Bennabi criticized al-Afghani's focus on politics in his call for reform, he considered him the pioneer of the reform movement. In his book *Shurāt al-Nahḍah* Bennabi said:

From the calm of the night [of Muslim civilization] while the Muslim Ummah was in deep sleep, a voice appeared from the Afghan land calling for the rise of a new day. It was calling: come to success! And its echo spread all over. It was the voice of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the person who awakened this Ummah to a new renaissance and a new day in its history.<sup>140</sup>

For Bennabi, besides al-Afghani's essential quality as a man of *fiṭrah* (innate nature) which denotes that he possessed all the faculties of the integrated man (see Chapter One), he was also a man of unique culture who inaugurated the era of the Homo sapiens (man of knowledge and culture). This culture would attract in its wake the young

intellectuals of the Muslim world.<sup>141</sup> Other connections with Abdu and Reda are stated in many passages of Bennabi's various books.

In general, he was influenced by the reformist movement that inspired his thinking towards the analysis of various issues concerning the Muslim world.

### (c) Connections with Friends and Colleagues

Bennabi's travel to Egypt and other Arab countries gave him a golden opportunity to revise and deepen his knowledge and experience. It helped him to meet many thinkers, politicians, and political and religious scholars, and to have students from all over the Muslim world and from various fields of research.

Through these open discussions Bennabi realized the importance of some of his ideas, and was able to further explain others. For instance, when he was in Egypt he received much criticism on the notions of the "religious idea" and religion as a catalyst, which were not fully explained in the first edition published in 1948. Therefore, he extended his analysis in his second 1960 edition.

During the Egyptian period, he also realized that in the Arab and Muslim countries there was an increasing concern about the issues related to sociology. The new generation showed its eagerness to understand social facts and their mechanism. Yet, Bennabi acknowledged that his discussions and explanations confused scholars and students, especially the issues related to the religious idea and its function as a factor in orienting history.<sup>142</sup>

Consequently, he decided to broaden his analysis to include not only Islam but also other religious ideas, and to examine the various explanations of the social phenomena and the role of religion in historical change.<sup>143</sup>

Bennabi's friends and scholars influenced him in developing his concepts and analysis. Although his original pivotal ideas remained the same as in the first edition of his books, he refined their meaning and explanation as a result of many discussions and connections with various thinkers. Very important for Bennabi was the friendship with Bensai, a close friend and companion from his first days in Paris until the time of his death, and a famous philosopher, thinker, and colleague.



Benssai was behind Bennabi's change of views. His professionalism in Islamic studies, his Sorbonne links, and his vast knowledge of philosophy and sociology made him a source of knowledge for Bennabi. From ongoing discussions Bennabi was able to develop his own views of civilization as a social phenomenon.<sup>144</sup>

He acknowledged in various passages of *Mudhakkirāt Shāhid li al-Qarn*, Benssai's influence on his personality. (1) He introduced Bennabi to the study of philosophy, sociology, and history at the university level,<sup>145</sup> (2) to the French Orientalist Louis Massignon who was a leading figure in orientalism and the study of Islam and Muslim culture, (3) and to the community of cultural and scientific traditions at the Sorbonne university in Paris.<sup>146</sup> Bennabi was different from his friend. While he was more inclined to mathematics and Cartesian thought, Benssai was more sentimental, and adopted the views of al-Ghazālī and Paskal.<sup>147</sup>

Both supported the 'Ulamā's way of reform because they believed it was the Algerian version of the *Wahhābiyyah* movement which they considered the saviour of the Muslim world. Bennabi was convinced that he and his friend would be the heirs of the 'Ulamā after they finished their studies.<sup>148</sup>

Bennabi was able to develop, re-evaluate, and deepen his concepts because of his connections, and became more convinced on the centrality of religion in reforming Muslim civilization and the imperative of changing the mindsets and cultures of the people before any project would succeed. Similarly, he stressed the need to recognize the civilizational stage of the Muslim world, and to address the social relations network which he considered the safety valve of society that provides the minimum connections necessary to accomplish its major objectives in the civilizing process.

### CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to find the internal social factors that influenced the formulation and development of Bennabi's approach to civilization, or to analyze how his personal experiences and interests affected his theorization. The author employed the internal-social

dimension of *Mu* to examine Bennabi's life, and to discover which aspects had an impact on his approach to civilization.

His influences were his family, religious, and educational background, and his intellectual pursuits through activism and scholarly connections.

The various aspects of his background and his intellectual pursuits guided him to focus his entire life on the study of the causes of the decline of Muslim civilization. His fruitful experience led him away from his academic affiliation as an electrical engineer to become an "engineer" of ideas who attempted to reformulate the intellectual life of the Muslim world which he considered the starting point in civilizational renewal.

He observed his family unit and was aware of the role Islam played in preserving its values and unity; hence, for a civilizing process to occur he conferred a central role to religion and the social relations network. With the advent of the colonizers, Bennabi observed the systematic destruction of a traditional way of life and the collapse of social relations and traditional institutions in Algerian society.

His personal experiences related to family, religion, and education influenced his assumptions on many issues, and contributed to the formulation of his central paradigm of civilization.

Bennabi's educational background played a pivotal role in addressing the causes of the decline of Muslim civilization which came mostly from within, from weaknesses in the inner fabric, and not a mere result of colonization. Therefore, he escaped the tradition of blaming the dark instead of switching on the light.

His background was also pivotal in understanding the two sides of Algerian society. He experienced first-hand the effects of the colonizers and understood both civilizing and colonizing values. This coexistence helped him to develop a critical view of the situation in both Muslim and Western civilizations.

His religious background deeply influenced his thinking and his approach of, as he notes in his first published books, the concept of the cyclical phenomenon, and his understanding of the religious idea and its role in the synthesis of civilizational values.

Bennabi had an opportunity not readily available to most members of his generation: his academic training in two educational systems. One opened his mind to the critical problems faced by the traditional system, while the other, allowed him to understand modern ideas and the social thinking and nucleus of Western civilization. Thus, the idea or "orientation" was partially due to that educational background.

His functional concept of civilization is due to his long exposure to the problems he faced in Algeria and France, while his understanding of the role of society in providing the necessities for its members was in part due to the various problems he or his family and fellow Muslims faced during his time.

His intellectual pursuits involved him in many activities which helped him to develop his concepts and analyses based on experience and practical evidence, while his intellectual connections helped him to re-evaluate, deepen, and make his concepts more consistent with the whole system of thought and the development of knowledge during his time.

## 5

## The Roots of Bennabi's Approach to Civilization: The External-Social Dimension

According to the metatheorizing approach, external social factors focus on the macro level analysis and address the objective aspects. They look to the institutions and the historical roots of thought. These factors mark a dimension of *Mu* that shifts to the macro level to look at the larger society and its impact on the development of theorization. In other words, the external social dimension emphasizes the relationship between the theorizing process and various institutions, structures of society, and other social activities that have direct or indirect relationship with the development of the approach or theory.<sup>1</sup>

The focus in this chapter is to discover the relationship between external social factors and the formulation and development of Bennabi's involvement in resolving the problems of Muslim civilization in the context of colonization and decolonization using sociology to understand the larger socio-historical context.

Muhammad al-Mubarak, in his preface to the Arabic edition of Bennabi's *Islam in History and Society*, stated that Bennabi belongs to the Arab Muslim country that suffered more than any other society the clash with European materialism in terms of the long period of colonization, the strength of conflict, and the depth of its impact. Algeria is the best example of pain and drama, and of the fruitful awakening and promise. Bennabi was involved and benefited intellectually and psychologically from that experience.<sup>2</sup>



Hassani and Mirish agree that the process of colonization as an external social factor has an impact on Bennabi's theorization,<sup>3</sup> and his insistence on the civilizational character of colonialism is unquestionable. That is to say, modern colonialism is essentially a European phenomenon,<sup>4</sup> and Bennabi sees colonialism as a part of the whole civilizational agenda of the West, and it needs a civilizational response: reviving the Muslim civilization and initiating a new civilizing process from within.<sup>5</sup>

This suggests that there is a need to specify which aspects of his approach are related to the phenomenon of colonialism and the process of colonization, and in what way they are related.

Analyzing the roots of Bennabi's approach to civilization with the tool of external-social dimension of *Mu*, the present chapter addresses the impact of two processes that especially shaped the last two centuries: colonization and decolonization. It also examines the relationship between the two processes and Bennabi's efforts to address the issue of civilizational backwardness in the Muslim world, and the persistent decline and stagnation of its civilization.

### THE COLONIZATION PROCESS

Western colonization in general, and the French in particular, in Bennabi's time was at its zenith, with more than seventy years of French domination before his birth. The Muslim world, as well as the entire African continent and most of Asia, was colonized by Western powers. Therefore, Bennabi's approach fits within this universal frame of colonialism.

Colonization as a process and colonialism as a phenomenon in European version shifted from mere events in human history to a planned agenda by modern Western civilization to "civilize" the "primitive" and the "barbaric." However, their origins may be traced back to the traditions of the Greeks and Romans, especially, the Romans where "colonization was an integral part of the Roman policy."<sup>6</sup>

With historical perspective, colonialism is deterioration in human history. We find that its roots trace back to Rome when the Roman civilization first imposed its colonial seal on the "records of history".<sup>7</sup>

Western civilization, with its modern outlook elaborated from the framework of Greco-Roman traditions,<sup>8</sup> took the colonizing character of that framework and developed it into a well systematized agenda.

Colonialism as a civilizational phenomenon began as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century with European political and economic expansion. At the beginning of that century various European nations discovered, conquered, settled, and exploited many parts in the Americas, Asia and Africa. Colonialism as a phenomenon and colonization as a process were an enterprise of expansion and domination spawned by the combined effects of rational bourgeois capitalism, demographic pressures, and power struggles among emerging European nation-states.

The present analysis addresses the general process of European expansion in the world and in Algeria.

### (1) European Expansion in the World

#### (a) *The Zeal of Expansion*

Through direct or indirect domination since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the West has played an ever increasing role in fashioning the world and giving it many of its practices and values.<sup>9</sup> Four centuries later, the impact of the West is extensive and persistent. The process of expansion over the "Rest" (as Huntington termed non-western civilizations [Huntington, 1996]), has been shaped by the "unfinished project" of Western modernity,<sup>10</sup> and accompanied by Orientalism and Christian missionaries who proposed a Western worldview, subdued the "other," and achieved the "Western civilizational mission" or "civilizing mission," as described and justified by Westerners.<sup>11</sup> Gordon asserts that:

By 1800, Europe controlled about 35 percent of the land surface of the world, by 1878, 67 percent and by 1914, 84 percent. After World War I the percentage rose even higher when England and France established mandates over some of the succession states to the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. This was the height of Western global hegemony, the culmination of the expansion of the West traceable to the crusades in the eleventh century.<sup>12</sup>

Many historians of colonialism support Gordon's notion. Lomba, for example, was of the same opinion.<sup>13</sup>

The groundwork for what we're to become the great modern Western empires can more accurately be dated from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after which the energies of the West were exported rather than focussed on internal discord to establish once and for all the European supremacy of secular over religious authority. "Europe" as a self-aware civilization emerged from the matrix of "Christendom" sensitive of its distinction from the "rest," while the other, be it Asia, the Orient, or the East, is always "exotic," "negative," and "despotic."<sup>14</sup>

Western expansion which in William McNeill's words led to "the irremediable collapse of the traditional order of each of the major Asian civilizations" and to the penetration of the West into "the issue of weaker societies," became progressively more irresistible.<sup>15</sup> Finally, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the last resistance of "traditional" forces of other civilizations collapsed, only later to give way to the resistance of new forces inspired by Western nationalism.<sup>16</sup>

The whole world after the 16<sup>th</sup> century and until about 1914 became a vast frontier for the West to exploit, and from which it derived its fabulous wealth. Western rule was justified by benevolent doctrines such as the "White Man's Burden" or the *mission civilisatrice*, but at the same time it also used cruelty and caused serious psychological, social, and cultural damage to host cultures.<sup>17</sup>

The West implemented the newly emerging – so called – sciences of anthropology, archaeology, and sociology to ensure the rationalization and scientificity of its claimed civilizational mission to civilize the indigenous, the barbaric, the primitive, and like terms used to denote colonized peoples and civilizations. It followed the dichotomy of distinction between it and others. For example, we/them, civilized/primitive, civilization/barbarism, West/rest, West/East, etc., were widely used in various Western circles. In addition, the West presented itself as the center while other civilizations were the periphery. The proclamations of the West as the rational, the civilized, the industrialized, and the free world were always antonyms to the East, the despotic, the aesthetic, the romantic, and even the barbaric and the feudal.<sup>18</sup>

The Western relationships with different parts of the "East" varied from the romantic view of certain Eastern civilizations to a hostile view toward others. Consequently, the European did bring with him from the Christian world, when he occupied the Muslim world at the beginning of the last century, just some of his soul's preparations, that kind of soul that reveals, upon a close look inside, a compound of passive virtues, while the Muslims saw only the oppressive and impermeable side of it. For Bennabi, the European soul was above all that of the colonizer who leaves his civilizing character before embarking for the "Barbary" coast, the Indies or the Islands of Java.<sup>19</sup>

#### (b) *The Ways of Expansion*

The degree of treatment of natives by Westerners varied according to the depth of penetration and cultural transformation. There are many ways in which the West imposed its rule on the world specifically on the East, like the economic system, social schisms, and alien standards.

After the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as Europe expanded, there gradually came into existence a world economic system that virtually embraced all parts of the world making them economically interdependent. The dominant element in this system was the West who inaugurated it, became the first to take advantage of it, and in different degrees subordinated the economies of the rest of the world to its own. Over time, Western hegemony produced a new form of exploitation by radically transforming local economic life to its advantage.<sup>20</sup> Western powers saw their economic domination with cold business calculations.<sup>21</sup>

European expansion also created social schisms, not unrelated to the phenomenon of economic dependence between an elite increasingly drawn into the cultural orbit of the West and tied to it in many economic and political ways, and the masses. This schism often separated leaders from their people in terms of language, manners, and political interests, and divided society into the "Westernized" and the "traditional."<sup>22</sup> Expansion and dominance were also imposed through alien standards. Western impact was felt among states like the Ottoman Empire and China, challenged by the West.

Aware of Western military superiority, the leaders of those states decided to borrow only the strand of military technology, without



taking into consideration the interrelatedness of all Western civilizational production.

They were also not aware that having a civilization is not merely a question of stacking its products. Rather, it is a dynamic effort of synthesizing its fundamental elements to start the civilizing process.<sup>23</sup>

In this regard, the elites in those States tried to distinguish modernization from Westernization, a matter that was not easy for them, especially when they adopted Western concepts like nationalism. This was later to become a disturbing idea for non-Western nations.

In the context of the East, with its complex mixture of people and variegated religions, languages, and heritages, Western nationalism could only serve to fragment and pit people against one another because it cannot be separated from its allies, i.e., ethnicity, racism, and the idolization of territorial sovereignty.

As for the Muslim world where loyalty in principle is to the Ummah of all Muslims irrespective of ethnic background, nationalism was a particularly dangerous and sometimes "heretical" challenge. It divided the people as never before, and fragmented Muslim countries along ethnic and linguistic lines, thus endangering if not destroying the unity of the Ummah.

Mentioning the confusion caused by nationalism in the Muslim world, Gordon wrote:

Among the Arab succession states to the Ottoman Empire, confusion of identification and loyalty lasts to this day. To many Muslim Arabs, before World War I, for example, it was unclear whether they were primarily Ottomans, Muslims, or Arabs. And to this day there is often confusion between whether one's highest loyalty is to the Arab nation, to the regional state (Syria, Iraq, etc.), to the city, to the extended family or to Islam.<sup>24</sup>

Gordon's quote portrays the general atmosphere which resulted from the process of European colonization of the Muslim world in general, and the adoption of European nationalism ideology in particular.

## (2) The Colonization Process in Algeria

Algeria experienced one of the most severe processes of colonization.<sup>25</sup> It was a "totalitarian colonialism," intense and far-reaching, felt more deeply than in other places colonized by France.<sup>26</sup> The colonization process affected all aspects of Algerian natives' lives. The colonizers changed the structure of society, social institutions, and their cultural traditions experienced severe damage. One cannot evaluate the dramatic changes brought to Algerian society without a comprehensive knowledge of the conditions in pre-colonial Algeria.

Therefore, the author will outline the nature and significance of the political, economic, and social changes, their effects on Algerian society and in particular on Bennabi's life and thought. The author will also present a general picture of Algerian society before the invasion of the French, and its efforts to annex Algerians to France and to Western culture and civilization.

### (a) Algerian Society Before the Colonial Era

As part of the Muslim civilization which in the last three centuries experienced a state of decline, Algerian society of the pre-colonial era was in its post civilized stage, if we use Bennabi's terms. However, sociologically speaking it was in a stable situation, and had a level of development higher than at any time during the entire colonial era. Its culture was more general than that of the colonial era, and belonged to Islamic traditions. There were some efforts to revive society and enable it to reactivate its civilizing process, especially during the first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although there was no high development, the people enjoyed a harmonious life, political stability, economic progress, cultural creativity, and social harmony.<sup>27</sup>

Politically, Algeria was sovereign, and enjoyed independence from the central caliphate in Istanbul. Nominally, it was part of the Ottoman caliphate, but practically it was fully independent internally and externally. In some cases, it was Algeria who assisted the caliphate regime politically, economically, and militarily. The government administration was in the hands of the natives. This sovereignty could be seen in various forms, such as in the treaties and conventions signed with European nations where France was given special importance.<sup>28</sup>

"Algeria was indeed a nation prior to the French invasion, a highly developed, populous country with a high literacy rate."<sup>29</sup> Algerian society was in a position to provide education, hence almost all the Algerians were literate. "There were two schools in each village."<sup>30</sup> There were official schools and non-official ones where the natives sent their children to learn basic religious notions. Asli mentioned that "[i]n every district, the natives were willingly teaching their children the Qur'an, prophetic tradition, and Arabic language." Primary and secondary education enjoyed noticeable development before the advent of the colonizers.<sup>31</sup>

Even Western sources recorded that there was a significant development in the educational sphere in Algeria. They drew attention to the status and the number of educational institutions in the pre-colonial era. As a matter of fact, there were in the capital of Algiers 2920 institutions for education, and schools for boys and girls. Constantine, in the Eastern part of Algeria, was famous for both its material and intellectual activities with 35 mosques, 7 *madrasah*, and 90 Qur'anic schools teaching some 1350 boys.

Telemcen, in the West, was another important place of education with 50 Qur'anic schools and 2 *madrasah*.<sup>32</sup>

Bennabi received his early education in those institutions that still remained (*zāwiyah*, *kuttāb*, and *madrasah*) in spite of mass destruction from the very beginning of French colonization. Bennabi confirmed that his religious background was owed to his attendance at those remaining traditional schools that not only educated children, but also as discussed in Chapter Four, preserved the very essential features of Islamic culture, the traditions and the identity of Algerian society.

However, historians agree that Algeria did not have well-known universities or religious centers as its neighboring countries. For example, Algeria did not have schools like those of *al-Zaytānah* in Tunis, *al-Qarawīyyīn* in Fez, or *al-Azhar* in Cairo.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the Algerian 'Ulama' found in the mosques their means of spreading education and Islamic teachings, and preserving Algerian identity.

Thus, as seen in the previous Chapter, the institution of the mosque played a pivotal role in educating Algerians and in protecting their

cultural values.<sup>34</sup> Bennabi saw the mosque in traditional Algerian society as the axis of all activities and the center for people's daily life.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, development and prosperity did not last long in Algeria. From the time the first settlers arrived in Algeria, many distractions and much damage took place in Algerian values, traditions, and institutions which led to an unprecedented change in the structure of the society. Let us further understand the changes made by the colonizers in Algeria.

#### (b) *The Total Colonization of Algeria*

To achieve its objective to deconstruct the organization of Algerian society,<sup>36</sup> and bring about annexation and fusion of Algerian identity and society, the French colonizing process followed a four-pronged strategy: Christianization, the imposition of French language, the illiteracy policy, and the impoverishment policy.<sup>37</sup>

French settlement in Algeria was not a mere coincidence, as some scholars and historians claimed.<sup>38</sup> The four mechanisms together denote the systematic institutionalized plan to westernize Algerian society, a process that had been well-planned thirty years before the invasion took place, and based on Napoleon's 1808 "Algiers' contingency plan" that prepared for the invasion of Algeria. Therefore, when the French first landed in Algiers they began to undermine Algerian institutions, humiliate the Algerian people, and destroy organized religion. French troops raped, looted, desecrated mosques, and destroyed cemeteries. It was an inauspicious beginning for Algerians of France's self-described *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission)<sup>39</sup> whose character, on the whole, was cynical, arrogant, and cruel.

Applying the so-called *régime du sabre* (government by the sword), Algeria was annexed to France and put under a Governor General, a high-ranking army officer invested with civil and military jurisdiction, who was responsible to the Minister of war. Under the policy the French took possession of the *beylik* (government owned lands), and over time, as pressures increased to obtain more land for settlement by Europeans, the state seized more categories of land, particularly those used by tribes, religious foundations, and villages.<sup>40</sup>



To change the demographic structure of society, the colonial rule flooded Algeria with the so-called *pièdes noirs* (black feet),<sup>41</sup> European settlers, largely peasant farmers or working class from the poor southern areas of Italy, Spain, and France. Others were criminals and political deportees from France, transported under sentence in large numbers to Algeria. In the 1840s and 1850s, to encourage settlement in rural areas official policy offered lands for free and a promise that improvements would be made.<sup>42</sup>

Algeria suffered the bulk of European settlers' migration. At its height (1955), they constituted 13 percent of the total population,<sup>43</sup> and appropriated 27 percent of Algeria's arable lands (more than 7 million acres).

The settlers increasingly changed the infrastructure of traditional society and systematically confiscated natives' lands. They made them more attached to the labor market provided by the colonizers to the point where Algerians found themselves working as employees on their own land confiscated by the colonizers. Another plan was to shift the basic structures of society from traditional forms of solidarity to more differentiated social structures.

Colonialism caused increasing differentiation, tribal erosion, rural exodus, and emigration of thousands of people to other countries in the Arab world or Europe. The author agrees with Entelis' comparison between the French colonization of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria where Morocco experienced a segmented colonialism and Tunisia an instrumental one. Algeria, however, experienced total colonialism which "constitutes unrestrained domination of the whole society at all levels, based upon the negation of the social, cultural, and economic order of the colonized country."<sup>44</sup>

Historically speaking, the author agrees in part with Entelis' and Ageron's periodization of the stages of colonization and decolonization in Algeria. In this section, the focus is on the stages of colonization while I postpone the discussion of decolonization to the coming sections. The colonial movement passed through four important stages that left their mark on the coming generations of Algerian society.<sup>45</sup>

The conquest and resistance stage (1830–1848) began with a policy of "limited occupation" which abandoned the policy of annexation of

the coastal cities to France by appointing a Governor-general in Algiers responsible to the Ministry of War in Paris.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the relative ease with which the Algerian coastal area was conquered and colonized, French colonization of other parts of Algeria faced sustained native resistance that took nearly two decades to overcome. The resistance led by al-Amir Abd al-Qadir (1807–1883) was a heroic one. Although it was persistent, resistance fighters could not compare with the French troops who were well armed and trained. With al-Amir's defeat in 1848, "Algerians lost not only their freedom but also their land."<sup>47</sup>

After the defeat, the French took possession of large territories of former Ottoman lands and religious endowments, and distributed them among settlers and military officers. Later, the policy of confiscation took over private holdings and communal or tribal properties. European settlers went so far as to take property by forcing landowners to migrate, displacing Muslims from their land.<sup>48</sup> Thus, "such land policies (reached) the heart of society because they contributed to the dislocation of the whole series of relations and practices of production and property rights that were the basis of social life."<sup>49</sup> The policy was carefully planned to isolate Algerians from any means of resistance and to change their social, political, economic, cultural, and religious structure.

The French did not hesitate to apply any policy to achieve their objectives, such as the policy of assimilation, massacres of people, confiscation of lands, severe condition of life, spread of illnesses and ignorance, malnutrition and lack of food and huge migration of people outside the country:

Along with the previous means, the colonizers officially encouraged settlement by Europeans from France, Corsica, Spain, Italy, and Malta. Compared to the total of 5 000 European civilians living in Algeria at the end of 1832, there were nearly five times of that number seven years later. By 1847, more than 100 000 had settled in the country.<sup>50</sup>

The result for Algerian natives was destitution, deprivation, and dependency in their own country.

One can recall a similar settler-Indian conflict in North and South America when the first Europeans settled in the New World. The process of expanding, the policy of confiscation, the change in the structure of society, Christianization, and impoverishment were the same:

There is the same story of treaties made and broken, the frontier pushed continually back; outposts built to protect the homesteaders; friendlies and hostiles, and sporadic surprise raids of frustration and vengeance by natives as they are gradually tracked down and cornered.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, in less than twenty years, the settlers multiplied by a factor of twenty and French colonization made deep incursions into the country's interior. The defeat of Abd al-Qadir's resistance and the destruction of his state made it easy for the French to further strengthen their presence in Algeria.<sup>52</sup>

The second resistance stage and colonial intensification (1847–1871) began in 1848 with a declaration by the government of the Second French Republic that Algeria was an integral part of France. During this stage, the colonizers' number intensified and the number of Algerian natives was reduced from three million in 1830 to two million forty years later.<sup>53</sup> Algeria was divided into three departments and the population was divided into two categories: the privileged Europeans, on the one hand, and the suppressed Muslim natives on the other. It was an apartheid policy similar to that of South Africa where there were differences in political and civil rights, social status and organization, where economic opportunities were not the same, and where there was no harmonizing coexistence. The Europeans were the landlords and owners of everything, while the natives had to settle in ghetto settlements in the countryside or mountains.<sup>54</sup>

In this second stage, Algerian society witnessed the expansion of the colonizers over the entire country, and an increase in the number of decrees and edicts for assimilating and annexing Algeria to France and towards making *L'Algérie Française* (French Algeria). In 1863 and 1865, France put into effect decrees that had a great impact on the lives of the natives. Those two decrees made the sale of tribal and

endowment lands an easy and freely-circulating commodity, and thereby facilitated their sale by individuals to settlers.<sup>55</sup> The primary aim of this decree (law) was:

the disintegration of the tribe. Its third article prescribed the following procedures: the delimitation of the territories of the tribes, the break-up of every tribe of the Tell and other agricultural areas, and the constitution of individual property and its distribution among the members of the *duwwars* (branches of tribes).<sup>56</sup>

When tribal lands were confiscated and sold, the entire system of cultivation and rights and privileges that had guaranteed a livelihood for the poor peasants was destroyed. The economic system would also be ruined, which meant that the whole social system would experience severe changes and rearrangements.

The edict played a pivotal role in shaping colonized Algeria by abolishing the tribes which were the principal obstacle to the pacification of Algeria, and proved to be an effective tool in dismembering Algerian rural society and fostering the development of colonization. This stage witnessed large scale massacres and intensive destruction, famine and genocide, especially under the leadership of Marshall Bugeaud, Colonel Saint Arnaud, and General Cavaignac.<sup>57</sup>

The total colonization and native acquiescence stage (1871–1919) witnessed the fatalistic pacification of Algerian Muslims and the expansion of the settler population. At this stage, as a result of the previous stages, "Algeria was pacified, but its population had been figuratively drawn and quartered. For the next half century, the country was to be a land of silence for the Muslims, politically, economically and socially."<sup>58</sup>

After crushing the last native revolt of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in 1871, the French intended to govern the natives with a special law termed the "*code de l'indigénat*" (Law for the Natives). It was a statutory mechanism which enabled them to control and contain the Muslims. That law covered the entire life of the natives in all aspects. As Entelis noted:

Its forty-one unconscionable provisions include: an Algerian Muslim was forbidden to speak against France and its government; Algerians



were prohibited from keeping stray animals for more than twenty-four hours; natives were not allowed to become school teachers without proper authorization nor were they permitted to travel from one place to another within Algeria without a visa permit, a kind of internal passport. Punishment for those crimes or others such as delay in paying taxes, giving shelter to strangers without permission, or holding gatherings of more than twenty people ranged from payment of fines, to confiscation of property, to indefinite administrative internment.<sup>59</sup>

The direct taxes imposed on the natives were a burden on their lives. To finance its development, colonial rule resorted to a special system of taxation imposed on Algerians from the beginning of colonization, and officiated under the name of *Les impôts Arabes* (Taxes on Arabs).<sup>60</sup> In addition, they paid indirect taxes. "There was also a series of compulsory labor obligations such as fire watches in forests, grasshopper drives, and official transport and public service taxes."<sup>61</sup> Severe punishments were always ready, made to punish any natives who dared to oppose such regulations.

*Le Régime du Sabre* policy was applied along with a systematic process of Christianizing the natives by spreading the Catholic institutions and transforming famous mosques into churches. This was the case of the *Katshawa* Mosque in Algiers. Christianization was introduced also through educational institutions and medical missionaries, in addition to the expanding number of European settlers. However, the colonizers used Christianization as a supplementary tool to enforce their agenda and implement their colonial policy.<sup>62</sup>

The stage of Algerian awakening (1919–1962) began when the colonization process reached its dominating zenith by the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the same time that the Algerian consciousness began to recover from the damage caused by French hegemony. This was due, first, to the call of reformism and revival under the umbrella of Pan-Islamism of al-Afghani and Abdu coming from the Eastern part of the Arab world,<sup>63</sup> and second, to the emergence of native intellectuals and politicians who sought to gain more equality between the natives and the settlers. They insisted on introducing some reforms to the situation of Algerians by the colonial regime.

A third reason for revival was the contribution of Algerians in World War I where about 200,000 Algerian Muslims served France loyally, giving them a new experience, and exposing them to new ideas and expectations.<sup>64</sup>

As the century progressed, the awakening continued through the interaction between some Algerian intellectuals, politicians, and Arab nationalists and activists either in the Arab world or in France, like Shakib Arslan and others from other parts of the world.<sup>65</sup> Lastly, the powerful appeal of Islam, which throughout the centuries provided Algerians a sense of collective identity, was mobilized anew in the 1920s and 1930s as an instrument of cultural assertiveness and nationalist self-worth.<sup>66</sup> All these factors contributed to the fourth stage of colonization, during which the conflict between natives and colonial rule witnessed its highest point. There were, in fact, two societies in one country: the oppressed Algerian Muslims who lacked all means of survival and were plunged into the misery of illiteracy, famine, poverty, and apartheid, and the European settlers who had all the means for a prosperous life and development, welfare, and domination. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu described the situation in the following passage:

The two societies were placed in a relation of superior to inferior, and separated by institutions or by spontaneous self-defense. The European society, a minority exercising the right of a majority in the social, economic and political spheres, is attempting, through racist ideology, to transform these privileges into law.<sup>67</sup>

The settlers had political, social, economic, religious, cultural, and educational institutions and organizations while the natives' traditional institutions such as religious schools, mosques, endowments, political as well as economic systems and social structure had been banished, outlawed, and destroyed by the French.

Traditional Islamic culture was forbidden, and Arabic was considered a foreign language, prohibited from official use. The French stood for secularism and the separation of church and state, so they tried to subordinate Islam and Islamic institutions. Muslim judges were

abolished or reduced to the rank of notaries, Qur'anic schools were closed or limited, *Zāwiyah* were controlled, and only education in French schools was allowed.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, this was a stage to establish and exercise full authority over the colony of Algeria, and to stand against the natives trying to gain equality.<sup>69</sup> Jundi mentions that:

In Algeria the plan of the colonizers was very dangerous. Arabic was eliminated and French was used as the official language for education. In 1938 the law of Shutan was issued, and with it Arabic was considered a foreign language. The French authority refused to issue any authorization to Algerians to open schools without official permission.<sup>70</sup>

They began to lose control over their private lives just as they had lost it in their public. On the other hand, the situation first led intellectuals and leaders to begin real revision and self-criticism towards inherited cultural traditions that were not originally either Islamic or civilizing. They confronted the invaders, and looked for a framework to resolve their problems. Only then they began their efforts of resistance and awakening in order to regain their independence.

(c) *The Process of Colonization in Algeria and its Impact on Bennabi*

In many passages of his books Bennabi expressed certain ideas that indicate his attitude towards colonization and the impact it had on his life and thought, and its presence in his theorization of the situation in the Muslim world.

As part of that world, Bennabi sees Algeria in a state of chaos during the last three centuries, compared to the glorious history and standards of Islamic civilization. That chaos has internal and external aspects that together form the dialectic of colonizability and colonialism. The former is the internal factor and the latter is the external one. For Bennabi, colonialism contributed to the chaos with its direct presence in all the spheres of life of the colonized people in Algeria, Indonesia, and elsewhere.<sup>71</sup>

In Algeria colonialism was totalitarian; the French colonization experiment worked. Unlike what may be termed "liberal" colonialism that gives a free hand to the colonized, totalitarian colonialism

intervenes directly in all domains of the colonized. It interferes even in the details of his religious life. This interference extends to education of native children in native schools, commerce in native stores, land of the natives and other aspects of their lives.

Bennabi drew attention to the element of colonialism which he considered not only essential in the crisis of the Muslim world, but one which also acted in a concealed way, destroying and breaking down any effort by the natives to tackle their problems honorably, while encouraging all sorts of myths and vagabondism.<sup>72</sup>

Bennabi places the destructive role of colonialism into a Qur'anic frame where he finds an explanation of the philosophy of colonialism: "Verily, whenever tyrants [literally kings], enter a town (country), they corrupt it, and turn the noblest of its people into the most abject. And thus do they behave."<sup>73</sup>

This verse illustrates that all sorts of colonialisms are methodically and systematically organized to set aside the most honourable, respected and thus accepted in the society and to install a system of preservation, debasement, and destruction directed against all dignity, nobility, and modesty.

To accomplish colonial objectives especially in the Muslim world, colonialism aimed to halt the march of any civilizing process in the colonized countries by setting up an artificial archaism and dichotomy between the components of society. Take for example the debate between *tajdid* (reform) and *taqlid* (tradition).<sup>74</sup>

Colonialism made efforts to revive all sorts of deviated sufi orders, *marraboutism* (cult movements), to facilitate the use of opium and various drugs among natives, and to spread falsified scripts of the Qur'an. Colonialism also followed the way of imposing morally and physically deformed people to represent Muslims in various assemblies... etc.<sup>75</sup>

In *Mudhakkirāt Shāhid li al-Qarn* Bennabi mentions the catastrophic changes that occurred in Algerian society during the colonial era.

He observed the work of colonialism from inside and kept in touch with its everyday impact on the natives in all aspects of their lives. He could see the real damage that colonialism caused in Algeria and other colonized countries, and its effects on culture, history, and the present



as well as the future of humanity. Thus he considered that "the colonial task is in fact an immense sabotage of history."<sup>76</sup>

Colonialism destroyed the social relations network of Algerians. It destroyed the family system and forced many families to flee the country to seek safety and escape the humiliation and annihilation caused by the colonizers.

Bennabi considered the migration towards the East of famous Algerian families as a danger that would affect the resistance of the Algerians against the settlers and their political struggle. He said "this migration reflects the total refusal of the natives to live communally with the settlers. This rejection represents the germ of the coming instability in the political life of the people."<sup>77</sup>

In his analysis of the modern Muslim world, Bennabi drew attention to the internal and external factors that contributed to chaos: internal and external factors. While the former are attributable to "colonizability", the latter are related to colonization. Bennabi considered that colonialism was not myth but was a form of eliminating acts which tended to destroy the values of individuals and the possibilities of development, as seen in countries under total colonization, like Indonesia, Lybia, and North Africa.<sup>78</sup>

Bennabi was deeply affected by the colonial policies in Algeria. In *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, he analyzed the process of colonization that dominated all spheres of life in Algeria, and prevented any revival or reform, act or movement.<sup>79</sup> In *Mudhakkirāt Shāhid li al-Qarn* he wrote his autobiography and recorded the everyday life of Algerians. In the introduction, Bennabi wrote "any Algerian in my generation who is literate could write what I have written."<sup>80</sup> The quote suggests that any Algerian who faced the same colonial phenomenon would have the same impressions.

If one views colonialism from a sociological point of view and not from the moralist one, the Europeans played a seemingly beneficial role in the history of the world over the last two centuries:

The man from Europe unknowingly played the role of the dynamite that explodes in a camp of silence and contemplation. The post-al-Muwahhid man... found himself thus in a new order that was not of

his making, and before two imperative necessities. Despite his bankruptcy, he must assure himself the minimum of dignity that Islam demands of all his followers... and he must assure himself of vital minimum nourishment in an implacable social order that no longer nourishes the sleepy.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, morally and socially, Muslims (Algerians in particular) were obliged to seek a new way of life compatible with the new conditions.<sup>82</sup> It was not only the case of Algerians or Muslims, but also of all colonized people who, under the circumstances mentioned by Bennabi, took steps towards a new process of decolonization that took universal shape, especially after World War II.

Besides the stagnation of Muslim civilization, as mentioned in Chapter Three, Bennabi grew up, matured, and witnessed the phenomenon of colonization.

However, the phenomenon of colonization, which formed the socio-historical atmosphere for Bennabi, was also preceded and accompanied by the phenomenon of colonizability; the psycho-mental state that makes people allow themselves to be colonized, conquered, and humiliated. This latter, is a symptom of a civilization in decline and of a culture that has lost its creativity under the burden of the last stage of its civilization course. Muslims' weakness enabled Europeans to impose their existence upon them,<sup>83</sup> while the opposite picture occurred when the conquered absorbed the conqueror and made him part of his civilizing forces. Such was the case in the 6<sup>th</sup> century of the Muslim era, 11<sup>th</sup> century of the Christian era, when the Muslim civilization absorbed the Tartars and the Mongols, and turned them into Muslims striving for the sake of Islam and its objectives; colonizability did not exist in the Muslim spirit.<sup>84</sup>

Specifically in Algeria, the effects of colonization on Bennabi's approach to civilization are clear. Liberation of the Muslim spirit from its psycho-mental state of colonizability and treatment of colonization as a civilizational phenomenon that needs a civilizational response were present in Bennabi's conception and theorization about civilizational reform.

It is also clear from Bennabi's writings that he understood the reasons for the decline of Muslim civilization, and linked them to internal causes rather than colonialism. Bennabi considered the latter an auxiliary factor that deepened stagnation and retardation, but it was not the main cause of decline.<sup>85</sup>

To blame colonialism is a political attitude, and the situation in the Muslim world needs a sociological, not a political approach. The former helps to see the work of colonization from the inside, to understand how colonization functions and penetrates into people's life as a factor of conflict.

The sociological approach helped the colonized to realize his state of colonizability and overcome it. As mentioned in the previous passages, Bennabi asserts that colonization was an essential element in the chaos of the Muslim world.<sup>86</sup>

Another concept with a strong link to the impact of colonization on Algerian society was the social relations network, which he developed based on his observations of the structure of traditional society and the destroying process of colonization. This is because:

the function of the social relations network is to ensure the society's survival and continuity as well as to preserve its character over time...another aspect of that function consists of organizing the society's vital energy so as to enable it to carry out its concerted action in history....However, he saw that the colonizing powers were aware of that function. Therefore, they followed the policy of "divide and rule" by creating social, political, religious and intellectual schisms and factions within one society.<sup>87</sup>

As seen in Chapter Five, the various schisms in colonized Algeria and the continuous work of the colonizers in destroying the social systems and the big families, and forcing the latter to seek refuge outside Algeria enabled Bennabi to understand the importance of the social relations network as a cornerstone of society that initiates the civilizing process. Through the various stages of colonization in Algeria the colonizers performed a continuous task of eradicating the very basics of Algerian society in its Arab Islamic nature.

Bennabi's extensive evaluation of the life of Algerians under the colonizers led to the formulation of one of his concepts of civilization we have seen in Chapter Two. For him civilization means:

the way the human being learns how to live within a community and how he perceives at the same time the significance and the role of the social relations network in organizing human life so as to enable the community to assume its historical role.<sup>88</sup>

This concept is the result of his understanding of the role of social relations in preserving the identity and the existence of society, and it denotes the importance of civilization in protecting the very basics of that network of social relations in society, so that it will be able to accomplish its historical objectives.

#### THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS

The discussion on the process of decolonization portrays the other socio-historical context that formed the circumstances in which Bennabi grew up and matured, and in which his consciousness developed. It examines decolonization worldwide and in Algeria.

##### (1) The Universal Frame of Decolonization

Decolonization is commonly understood to mean the process by which the people of the developing world gained their independence from their colonial rulers. The process was long, but in fact, it always existed alongside the colonizing process. Since the first European spirit of worldwide expansion of civilization, culture, and vision, a partial or full resistance has been persistently present. Between the two World Wars most colonial systems, while geographically at their zenith, were politically strained or on the verge of revolt.<sup>89</sup>

There were many factors that contributed to the spirit of decolonization. The "non-aligned movement" was one of the factors that witnessed the efforts of third world countries toward making a new axis in international relations.



The other factor was the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and the Maoist Revolution of 1949. Both gave international aspirations to many movements in Asia, Africa, and South America. The spread of socialist movements and revolutions, and the various nationalistic movements contributed to the political instability of the colonial powers, and provided an impetus for the movement of decolonization throughout the world.<sup>90</sup> Nationalist movements benefited from Communism by adopting some of its organizing mechanisms. Some of them saw the advantage of attaching themselves to an international organization which Communism provided.

In the Muslim world, another idea that contributed to the spirit of decolonization was the idea of Pan-Islamism. The latter emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the decay of the Ottoman caliphate, which was called the "sick man", and the increasing pressure of the European superpowers on it. Pan-Islamism developed thanks to the efforts of al-Afghani, Abdu and their students who tried to establish a league which could unite Muslims under the universal umbrella of Muslim brotherhood.<sup>91</sup>

Muhammad Imarah is of the view that Pan-Islamism, led by al-Afghani and his students and supporters all over the Muslim world, was facing two challenges. One was the disintegration of the Ottomans who, in the later centuries, became a force of backwardness and stagnation, and were against any reform or revival among Muslims. The other was colonialism as an ideology and colonization as a damaging process. In other words, Pan-Islamists were facing colonizability, on the one hand, and colonization on the other, if we use Bennabi's terminology.<sup>92</sup>

## (2) The Decolonization Process in Algeria

### (a) Factors of the National Algerian Awakening

As mentioned previously, the development of colonization in Algeria was paralleled by the development of resistance. Although revolt and resistance against the colonizers never ceased to exist in Algeria, systematized resistance was born only with the advent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century during the third and the fourth stages of colonialism.

In the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century modern Algerian nationalism was developed under the double efforts of the 'Ulamā' on the intellectual-religious level and under politicians on the political level.

Despite their differences in views and approaches, both wings of the national movement agreed on uniting their efforts on the central issue of their struggle: regain independence and freedom, and Algerian identity which consists of Islam, Arabic, and the Algerian homeland.<sup>93</sup>

In *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah* that appeared for the first time in 1947, Bennabi mentions this agreement among them. He said that they "agreed upon one important point; this was the will of movement and reform of the Algerian society."<sup>94</sup>

In Durkheim's words, there was a type of conscious "division of labor." While the 'Ulamā' directed their struggle towards reforming Algerian identity and its Islamic culture, as well as rebuilding a new educational system, the national political parties directed their struggle toward political and social rights within the framework of Algerian identity.

The elite, founders of Algerian nationalism, were not isolated from the universal movements of ideas, concerns, and issues. They had strong relationships with their Arab, Muslim, African, Asian and European counterparts outside Algeria where they made contact by means of immigration for study or work purposes, especially to Europe and the eastern part of the Arab world.

For instance, Algerian emigrants to France played an important role in bringing the Algerian affair to the fore, and at the same time they learned new ways to strive for their nation.<sup>95</sup> The Algerian emigrants in France also played a role in the rise of some of their political demands. As Entelis estimated, by 1923 there were about 70,000 Algerian workers employed in France's major cities. Many of them experienced severe hardship common to poorly paid workers in industrial countries. The workers' economic and social protests quickly gave way to political demands.<sup>96</sup>

At the intellectual level, the migration of many Algerians individually or collectively to Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and other parts of the Muslim world served to connect Algerians to the Muslim conscience.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, many Algerian thinkers and

activists among the Algerian elite pursued their education in the higher institutions of education in many Islamic countries, especially in the Arab world. Many of them returned to Algeria with a clear vision of the reform movement, and became generators of the *ishlah* in Algeria. Among them, are the 'Ulamā' and some political leaders of the Algerian revolution. In al-Qurayshi's words, "the movement of migration benefited the Algerian experiment socially and politically, and increased the consciousness of freedom and independence among Algerians."<sup>98</sup>

A discussion of the two wings of the Algerian national movement uncovers the underlying structure of Bennabi's paradigm versus the two dominant paradigms during his time: colonialism and decolonization. Furthermore, the discussion will unveil the relationship between Bennabi's paradigm and the two sub-paradigms of decolonization, the reformist and the modernist.

#### *(b) The Political Wing of the National Movement*

Algerian awakening was born under the influence of international events and efforts of decolonization, as well as ideas of reform in the Arab world. In this section, the author will discuss the political wing of the national movement.

Although the movement agreed on some central issues of Algerian identity, various trends within it were adopting the modern concept of nationalism. Two broad approaches are distinguished: the parties that called for full independence for Algeria, and those who called for autonomous rule from France. While the former were known as radical nationalists, the latter were liberal assimilationists.

#### *(1b) The Radical Nationalists*

One of the most influential parties in the Algerian national movement in the 1920s was L'étoile Nord-Africaine (The North African Star) founded officially in Paris in 1926.<sup>99</sup> However, its real foundation date was 1924, and its founder was al-Amir Khalid (1875-1936), son of the late Amir Abd al-Qadir, founder of modern Algeria. After the exile of al-Amir Khalid, the leadership of the party was taken over by his secretary general and later by its renovator, Msali al-Haj. The latter

was a member of the French communist party, who then joined the struggle of the North Africans against the French hegemony. The "North African Star" was the culmination of the continuous struggle of North African Muslim peasant groups who were working under the domination of the settlers. Its main manifesto was the call for independence from France. During his presidency, Msali al-Haj's national perspective went through an intellectual transformation, as Cleveland noticed, from militant socialism to militant Islam,<sup>100</sup> a matter which had not been tolerated by the French. Therefore, upon his increasing struggle to defend the material, moral, and social interests of North African Muslims,<sup>101</sup> the party was dissolved after a period of time, and its leader Msali al-Haj was imprisoned for his anti-colonial activities.

In 1935, after his release from prison, Msali al-Haj met many Arab and Muslim activists and thinkers. Among them was the well-known intellectual Shakib Arslan, whose activities and writings on Nationalism and Pan-Arabism had influenced Msali al-Haj. Therefore, he adopted a more revolutionary stand and pro-Arab-Islamic values. Upon his return to Algeria he founded the Parti Du Peuple Algerien (The Algerian People's Party), known by its abbreviation among Algerians as the PPA. It was more nationalistic in nature with an attempt to fuse social values with Islamic teachings. It also used the powerful appeal of Islam for the people to mobilize the various strata of society in the collective struggle for the independence of Algeria.<sup>102</sup>

Subsequently, a gradual conflict developed in the PPA between Msali and the new generation of the party members. This was known as the crisis between Msali and the centralists. The latter were members of the central committee of the party. As a result, members of the committee formed a new one known as the Revolutionary Committee for Unity and Action which prepared for the Algerian revolution of 1954, when it changed its name to the National Liberation Front, or FLN, the French abbreviation for the National Liberation Front.

The latter made radical decisions that changed the history of colonial Algeria. It forced all parties and organizations to work together for the armed revolution for an independent Algeria. For seven years of harsh struggle and persistent fighting against French hegemony, all factions and trends of the national movement fused into one body for one objective, which they achieved on July 5, 1962.



*(2b) The Liberal Assimilationists*

The second trend within the national political movement was that of Farhat Abbas (d. 1984), and focused on the idea of assimilation of the natives into French society. It developed in Algeria in the 1930s and included Algerian liberals and bourgeois who received their education in French, and who tried to work for the rights of Algerians.<sup>103</sup> The assimilationists were Algerian voices against the French policy in Algeria. Their main objective was not total independence, but "to secure equality for Muslims, thereby giving them a better chance to participate in all aspects of French metropolitan society."<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, Farhat Abbas and his colleagues were raising the voice of the natives for representation in the elections.

The origins of this party could be traced back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the Movement of Young Algerians represented by a small group of well-educated middle class, working toward Franco-Algerian equality. However, the party took shape in 1934 when the elite representatives in elected Algerian bodies, including Abbas, formed the *Federation des Elus Musulmans* (Federation of Elected Muslims).<sup>105</sup>

The Federation group argued for Muslim integration into French society, including full citizenship without having to declare one's personal status as a Muslim. Among other objectives was representation in French parliament, administrative equality in which Muslims could exercise real power, equality in the military and civil service, and the suppression of discriminatory legislation directed against Muslims.<sup>106</sup>

The main issue that caused much criticism was this trend's concept of the Algerian nation. It denied the existence of an independent Algerian nation in history. In fact Abbas, in his famous article "La France c'est Moi," said:

Had I discovered the Algerian nation I would be a nationalist and I would not blush as if I had committed a crime. However, I will not die for the Algerian nation, because it does not exist. I have not found it. I have examined history. I questioned the living and the dead. I visited cemeteries; nobody spoke to me about it. I then turned to the Qur'an and I sought for a solitary verse forbidding a Muslim from integrating himself with a non-Muslim nation. I did not find that either. One cannot build on the wind.<sup>107</sup>

The article reached many sectors and faced severe criticism. It was rejected by many Algerian nationalists as well as by the Algerian people. The French authorities in France and Algeria also rejected it. Thus, many considered that the article had marked the end of the assimilationists' existence. Among the opponents of the assimilationist proposal was Ibn Badis who published an article on behalf of the 'Ulama' in their newspaper *al-Shihab* rejecting Abbas's attitude. Ibn Badis said:

History taught us that the Muslim people of Algeria were created like all the others. They have their history illustrated by noble deeds; they have their religious unity and their language; they have their culture, their customs, and their habits with all the good and bad in them. This Muslim population is not France; it cannot be France, it does not want to be France...It does not seek to incorporate itself in France.<sup>108</sup>

Ibn Badis's statement was one among many to oppose Abbas's proposal, but it was the strongest among them. As a result, assimilationists and particularly Abbas changed their way of approaching the Algerian question. Later, Abbas greatly altered his ideas and attitudes since they gained no acceptance or respect from either the French or the Algerians. In 1939, he proposed the idea of "attachment" rather than assimilation.<sup>109</sup> Abbas changed his attitude from assimilationist to revolutionist by the beginning of the Algerian revolution of 1954. At that time he declared: "my role, today, is to stand aside for the chiefs of the armed resistance. The methods I have upheld for the last fifteen years – cooperation, discussion, persuasion – have shown themselves to be ineffective."<sup>110</sup>

Bennabi believed that real efforts for the Algerian nation were made by the 'Ulama' party who represented the religious and intellectual wing of the national movement, and who planned to work in a silent and organized way.

*(c) The Intellectual Religious Wing of the National Movement*

The national movement in its political aspect lacked a consistent framework in providing general guidelines for its struggle. While it remained loyal to the cause of regaining freedom and honor for the

Algerian people, it did not have consistent orientation towards those great objectives. So they adopted the popular liberal and socialist line of thought and political activism. Given that its work alone, although important, was not enough to gain independence, the efforts of the 'Ulamā' complemented the political struggle for a sovereign Algeria.

The Association of Algerian religious scholars, the 'Ulamā', traces its roots back to 1913 when Benbadis performed his pilgrimage and met Shaykh al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi in Madinah. They discussed the issue of reforming Algerian culture and society, and established the Association eighteen years later, in 1931, which would provide an educational framework for cultural, social, and political reform in Algeria.<sup>111</sup>

The work of the 'Ulamā' emphasized three main aspects of the reform project: first, to purify Islam from corruption, myths, and cults; to revive it based on the philosophy of the reform movement of al-Afghani and Abdu; to defend it against proselytizing; and to free its main institutions like mosques, endowments, and courts. The second aspect was to preserve Arabic and Islamic education, and the third, to preserve the Algerian nation and its land by preserving and reviving the cultural, civilizational, and historical dimensions of the Algerian nation.<sup>112</sup>

For the 'Ulamā' the intellectual battle was more important because of its peculiarity and pre-eminence. Therefore, as a matter of religious and scientific duty, they worked to bring forth a new generation by means of education, and focused on fighting myths and religious heterodoxy, cult movements, and corruption among Algerians.

They carefully planned to free and purify Islam by eradicating all religious-linked corruption. They attacked some Sufi sects as well as other groups whose activities influenced Muslims on the correct teachings of Islam. They were also aware of the pitfalls created by those cult movements and Sufi sects in leading people to worship, meditate, or just dance around tombs, shrines, relics, or rocks.<sup>113</sup>

As ElTayeb mentions, the 'Ulamā's' reformist program mainly focused on religious renaissance, the independence of Muslim creed, social revivalism, and cultural renewal.<sup>114</sup> The 'Ulamā', in their struggle against deviated Sufi sects and cult movements, had a very

systematic plan: they established schools, *madrasah*, and centers for the education of youth and layman, as well as a very strong Islamic press to defend Algerian culture and society. They also used the mosque to spread their message and to convert people to the idea of restructuring the Algerian nation.

With their focus on religious and cultural reform, the 'Ulamā' prepared the Algerian people for the violent conflict with France. Had it not been for this movement, Algerians would have remained under the influence of Sufi "Saints" whose followers supported and consolidated the French colonial administration.<sup>115</sup>

Therefore, the 'Ulamā' became the most influential group in modern Algerian history. Their affirmation of Islamic and Arabic language had the greatest impact on other Algerian nationalists, and although they were concerned with the problem of Islam, their contribution to the development of a nationalist opposition increased the importance of Islam as an integral part of the Algerian identity.<sup>116</sup>

### (3) The Impact of the Decolonization Process on Bennabi

In *L'Afro-Asiatisme: conclusion sur la conférence de Bandoeng* (The Idea of Afro-Asiatism in the Light of the Bandung Conference) which he dedicated to the people of Africa and Asia and to the affairs of the Third World and the non-aligned nations in the 1950s and 1960s, Bennabi became aware of the universal frame of decolonization; that conference of non-aligned countries was an opportunity for a third way, and not necessary capitalism or communism.<sup>117</sup>

Besides witnessing the process of colonization, Bennabi also saw the process of decolonization and changes in the social, political, and economic spheres of Algerians. He also witnessed, from his early childhood (Chapter Four), the emergence of the national movement in its political and reformist wings. Algerian awakening is considered by many writers one of the factors that directed Bennabi's life as a social thinker.<sup>118</sup>

Bennabi considered himself a product of the national movement, and aware of all aspects of the conflict between the natives and the settlers he considered all its dimensions and felt the need to become a



militant for the freedom and honor of Algeria.<sup>119</sup> This inclination toward the national movement did not prevent him from developing his own views about the need for a civilizational approach and framework to the issue of colonization and decolonization.<sup>120</sup>

In *Mudhakkirāt Shāhid li al-Qarn*, Bennabi mentions that he was involved in the activities of Msali and his movement which emerged among Algerian workers and emigrants in France. He recorded that Msali contacted the Association of Maghrib Students of which Bennabi was a member, and later met them in the Latin Quarter to ask them to work together to reactivate the political movement.<sup>121</sup>

It was an opportunity for Bennabi to meet one of the important driving forces in the Algerian awakening, but was very disappointed in Msali's attitude and his way of approaching the Algerian affair. He saw that his own country's drift towards noisy demonstrations was far from pushing the march of the Algerian people towards revolution.

He held Msali responsible for many pitfalls faced by Algeria after its independence.<sup>122</sup> Although he was critical, he acknowledged Msali's contribution to developing awareness among Algerians in their struggle for freedom and independence.<sup>123</sup>

While he was in France, Bennabi expressed his anger over the assimilationists leader's proposal. As he wrote in his *Mudhakkirāt Shāhid li al-Qarn*, "I read the title of the article and saw the name of the writer (Farhat Abbas), and was certainly shocked that day. There is no doubt that the shock was big in the homeland."<sup>124</sup>

Showing disagreement with both political wings of the Algerian national movement, Bennabi decided to have links with the intellectual wing, which in his opinion was more faithful to the principles of Algerian nationalism.

In *Shurāt al-Nahdah*, Bennabi considered that the reform movement represented by the 'Ulama' was closest to souls and hearts because their method was based on the Qur'anic principle which focuses on changing of the inner self prior to changing the human condition.<sup>125</sup> The 'Ulama's motto, "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves,"<sup>126</sup> led Bennabi to acknowledge that this was the way that leads to civilization. As seen in Chapter Three, Bennabi considered "man" the primary

device of civilization without whom the civilizing process cannot proceed.

Bennabi was influenced by the 'Ulama's work, methodological and fundamental both intellectually and politically. On the one hand they were formulating of Algerian identity, while on the other they were preparing the platform for the political wing of the national movement to further its political struggle with a clear vision.<sup>127</sup>

Bennabi maintained close relations with various groups and was consciously aware of the events of that time. As recorded in many passages in his books, he was able to evaluate the situation and jot down influential ideas and efforts whose impacts were valuable in the Algerian awakening. Although the 'Ulama' had ties with various reformist groups especially in the eastern part of the Arab world, they had their own originality and distinctive features, and Bennabi's close observations of their work, ideas, and activities, emphasized the distinctiveness of their line of thought:

There was a general tendency to render this movement ['Ulama'] to eastern origins; such as those of al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu... In fact, the reformist movement in Algeria is characterized by its continuity, and maybe this fact is true also in the entire Muslim world where the callers for reform were in succession from Ibn Taymiyyah in the eighth century of the Muslim era.<sup>128</sup>

Despite his criticism of the 'Ulama's involvement in politics, in 1936, Bennabi remained a supporter of their educational and reformist programs because "although they deviated from their method and sometimes depended on non-methodological thinking, they remained the vanguard of the authentic Algerian renaissance and one of its powerful motivators."<sup>129</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Bennabi's personal and intellectual growth must be understood in the context of colonization and decolonization.

At the micro level, the two processes influenced his life. While he was a teenager, he lived and studied in Constantine, the headquarters

of Ibn Badis and the reformist movement of the 'Ulamā'. Bennabi related to its various members and had links with its ideas. The political movement with its various trends shaped Bennabi's personality.<sup>130</sup>

At the macro level, while living in a colonized country and studying in colonial schools in Algeria and France, Bennabi was keenly aware that his distinctive identity as Algerian, Arab, and Muslim had been slowly eroded by more than 132 years of French colonial rule. It took a long process and huge efforts by the 'Ulamā' and other sections of the Algerian national movement to maintain that religious, intellectual, and cultural identity.

Bennabi witnessed the destruction of traditional institutions and the social relations network of Algerian society through the systematic efforts of the colonizers and their administration. He also witnessed the efforts of reform by the national movement that strove to regain Algerian identity and freedom. Those efforts took Algerian society into a new era of history where the civilizing process begins, where both wings of the national movement, especially the 'Ulamā', led the society beyond the passivity of post-*al-Muwahhid* culture and paved the way for a culture of dynamism and civilizational renewal.<sup>131</sup>

The two types of experience directed Bennabi's attention to the importance of the religious idea (ideal) in the production and promotion of a new dynamic culture that shapes people's ideas and provides the environment for new paradigms that tackle the issues of historical change. Moreover, the demise of some institutions and the advent of some others during the two processes enabled Bennabi to realize the distinction between what he called the post-civilized stage and the pre-civilized stage.

For Bennabi, the reform movement and the political struggle after World War I marked the shift in the Algerian elite from the post-civilized stage of the post-*al-Muwahhid* era to the pre-civilized stage of a new Muslim civilizational cycle which needed more systematic work to proceed with its civilizing process.

Bennabi's observations during this time provided fertile material for the development of certain parts of his approach, specifically his concept of the social relations network and its function, and the role of religion in providing dynamic interaction for the element of

civilization. Bennabi belonged to colonized Algeria during the first two thirds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and this enabled him to develop an insider's view of the dynamics and the possibilities of renewing Muslim civilization in modern times.

He was able to understand the factors that contributed to its decline and comprehend the internal and external causes of the malaise manifested in the Algerian drama as part and sample of the Muslim world. Therefore, ever since his first book was published, he insisted on developing an approach to the Algerian affair within the framework of Muslim civilization that had been making several attempts to revive itself.

In fact, when he discussed the various approaches to the state of stagnation in the Muslim world in general, and in Algeria in particular, he asserted that they lacked the comprehensive vision of the different manifestations of the crisis. Hence, they wasted much time searching for partial solutions to some aspects of the issue because of the unsystematic and non-methodological diagnosis of the sickness that attacked the Muslim world for centuries. Thus, we observe contradictory proposals that vary from the economic to the political or moral approach instead of taking an integrative move towards the various aspects.<sup>132</sup>

In the same context, Bennabi considers that to resolve the problems inherent to colonization and colonizability we have to resolve the basic issues at the base of the entire crisis.

An integrative framework makes a good starting point. The problem of every person is the problem of its civilization, and to resolve any problem we need to relate it to the state of the people's civilization.

In the case of Algeria, it is related to a civilization in a state of stagnation, and all proposed solutions must take into consideration the broadest cultural identity and the general framework to which a given society belongs.<sup>133</sup>

Bennabi proposed a new paradigm to look at the problems of the Muslim world, including colonization and colonizability. The civilizational paradigm suggests the analysis of human conditions and societal change within the frame of civilization as a unit of analysis and a framework for relating different aspects of the same issue.



The proposed paradigm that Bennabi developed is related in part to the external social factors during his life, that is, the two processes of colonization and decolonization and the various approaches, as well as the events and social contexts related to them.

The external-social dimension of *Mu* helps to understand how Bennabi studied the problems of civilization and examined historical change based on his understanding of the two processes of colonization and decolonization. External social factors determined his starting point to study civilization. His concern over the situation in Algeria and the Muslim world during his time led him to formulate his approach for an adequate solution to the various problems that his society and the Ummah were facing.

## 6

## The Roots of Bennabi's Approach to Civilization: The Internal-Intellectual Dimension

This study discusses the internal-intellectual factors that form the third dimension of metatheorizing in its *Mu* subtype. It "involves the study of cognitive factors"<sup>1</sup> related to the field of civilization and internal to Bennabi's field of study to resolve the problems of stagnation, backwardness, and disintegration in the Muslim world. It identifies the major cognitive paradigms, schools of thought, changes in paradigms, and general metatheoretical tools with which to analyze existing theories and develop new ones.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, the following questions will be considered: how had scholars before Bennabi approached the study of civilization? What were the essential characteristics of their approaches? How did Bennabi perceive the field of study of civilization? How was Bennabi influenced by other approaches? I will use two perspectives to answer them: 1) the dominant paradigms, schools of thought, and approaches regarding the study of civilization and their impact on Bennabi's approach to civilization, and 2) a comparative analysis of Bennabi's approach and other approaches to the issue of civilization and interpretation of its movement, as well as some major concepts related to it.

### THE FIELD OF STUDY OF CIVILIZATION

To start with, four points are worth mentioning: Bennabi's statement on the centrality of civilization; agreement among Bennabi's scholars

on the centrality of civilization; the difficulty of tracing ideas to the origins of Bennabi's work; and the dominance of two broad paradigms, philosophy of history and social sciences, in the study of civilization.

Bennabi explicitly asserted that his main concerns were the study of civilization and the problem of human conditions taken as a unit of analysis:

The problem of every nation, in its essence, is its civilization. Therefore, it is not possible for anyone to comprehend and resolve his/her problems, if he does not elevate his thought and capacities to the level of great human affairs and speculate deeply in order to understand the factors that construct and deconstruct civilizations.<sup>3</sup>

He considered the study a unique field that takes civilization as its subject matter, while its methodology and concepts are derived from various sciences, history, sociology and psychology, in an integrative manner that enables the researcher to discover this phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, he developed his own concepts and terms, and applied his views to interpret the movement of civilization throughout history.

Bennabi's scholars agree that his main concern and starting point was the study of civilization.<sup>5</sup> Gassum among others claimed that Bennabi was concerned with providing an approach to study the present state of Muslim civilization currently in a state of malaise, decline, and backwardness in all its aspects.<sup>6</sup>

The third point raises questions as to how aware Bennabi was of the various investigations that looked into civilization even though in many passages of his books Bennabi discussed and evaluated what various philosophers and social scientists claimed on this issue.

The author agrees with Bariun who stated that it is surely to be assumed that Bennabi read the works of a number of historical and social thinkers who represented various philosophies and schools of thought. Nonetheless, in his writings he rarely fully stated his sources when presenting his views on civilization.<sup>7</sup>

The reader may easily find the names of some philosophers, social scientists or thinkers, but not a direct reference to specific books from which Bennabi quoted the idea.

In his preface to the Arabic edition of Bennabi's *Islam in History and Society*, al-Mubarak mentioned that Bennabi was not a mere academic writer but a thinker who saw the obstacles of his nation, thus his concern was for solutions more than preoccupations about writing an academic masterpiece about civilization. He was more than a writer; he was combining in his soul the vision of the philosopher, the thinker, and the enthusiasm of the preacher who believes in a sacred mission.<sup>8</sup>

To overcome the barrier, this chapter applies content analysis, one of the techniques mentioned in the general introduction that will trace some ideas back to the origins, to the thinkers and their work.

Scholars also agree that civilization studies were for a long time one of the subject matters and speculative part of philosophy of history.<sup>9</sup> However, after the developments in critical philosophy and the emergence of the social and human sciences, the scientific world witnessed a kind of widening of its scope, if not a change of its paradigm, towards the field of social sciences with its various approaches, schools and methods within the general framework of civilization studies.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the study of civilization has been under the dominance of the two paradigms of philosophy of history and the social sciences.

The analysis of dominant paradigms and various schools and perspectives establishes links between Bennabi's concepts, terms, and methods and their origins in the related fields and dominant schools of thought during his lifetime and throughout the history of the subject matter.

#### THE PARADIGM OF PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Within the paradigm of philosophy of history there are generally three schools that share the study of civilization with their related paradigms: the cyclical view, the progress view, and the simple side-by-side histories of mankind's diverse people paradigms.<sup>11</sup>

While the side-by-side histories paradigm was a part of history in its "first order," the other two construct the part of history in its "second order" and have a far-reaching influence and a greater impact on the study of civilization. They form the main views of historical change in human conditions and the main schools that approached the issue of



civilization by noticing patterns in historical change and conceptualizing them.<sup>12</sup>

The following pages will discuss the general view, the varied approaches, the methods used, the prominent philosophers of history in these three schools, the results of their study of civilization, and how schools and approaches influenced the formulation and development of Bennabi's approach to civilization.

### (1) The School of Historical Progress and its Contribution and Impact on Bennabi

#### *(a) Contributions of the School of Historical Progress to the Study of Civilization*

Historical change regarding the school of historical progress evolves from the primitive to the more developed and more complicated. The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the advent of several theories within this school<sup>13</sup> with Hegel, Comte, and Marx as its leading scholars.<sup>14</sup> Influenced by the growing and expanding project of enlightenment and modernity, these protagonists saw history as a progressive process, and their contribution to the study of civilization formed Bennabi's development and approach.

They believed in the progressive character of history, whether spiral (Hegel, Marx) or linear (Comte), although there was a difference in conceptualizing the moving forces of history. They were the "prophets" of progress during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup>

For Hegel world history was a battleground for ideas and spiritual forces; for Marx it was a battleground for classes, technologies and economic forces. Hegel saw history progressing toward something like the Prussian Monarchy, whereas for Marx the goal was the classless society.<sup>16</sup>

Based on his idealistic worldview, Hegel considered the historical development of human civilization progressive and passing through the last stage where the mind or the spirit leads to the absolute.

There are three stages of the objective mind or spirit: the abstract right; morality of conscience or subjective morality; and the stage of social morality or of the advent of the State. The stages are more

metaphysical than historical, contemplative rather than empirical. They form a rational process and are proved by speculative cognition.<sup>17</sup> They do not refer essentially to historical succession, yet such dialectical progress is revealed or manifested in the consciousness of mankind in a particularly significant manner at certain moments of the historical evolution.<sup>18</sup>

For instance, abstract right was typically manifested at the time of the Roman Empire; the morality of conscience or subjective morality in the centuries of Catholicism, and still more in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment, whereas the third and final stage, the stage where all antinomies are resolved, appears in history when the German Protestant community takes political form and the State emerges as the objectivation of the divine. The latter, for Hegel, was manifested in the Prussian State.<sup>19</sup>

Hegel's main contribution is his dialectical method. In the dialectical perspective, things which seem to be opposites are, in fact, only prior stages of a final synthesis. Therefore, history is the story of the progress of civilization and human freedom. For Hegel, humanity moves progressively toward its own idea of freedom, which is the "self-contained existence" of each individual. Progress, Hegel proclaimed, "is the boundless impulse of the world spirit – the goal of its irresistible urging."

The first stage of civilization is the East "the Orient," the civilizations of China, India, and the Middle East. At this stage humanity was in the childhood of its history, while with the Greeks humanity reached its adolescence, and the notion of freedom of the individual was accepted: "therefore they were free, but they and the Romans likewise, knew only that some are free – not man as such."

According to Hegel, the Romans led to the "maturity" of mankind, when those same free individuals and their slaves created a great material and political empire. Then came the German or European world with the advent of modern civilization which represents the culmination of progress.

Thus, Hegel proclaimed, Europe is absolutely the end of history "since the history of the world is nothing but the development of the idea of freedom."<sup>20</sup>

As the father of idealist historical theory of the nation and historical progress, Hegel believed that the nation-state worries would disappear. People become participants in a solid and stable "ethical social realm" created by the expansion of the state's powers and its professional and enlightened civil servants.

The other leading figure in the school of historical progress was Marx who was inspired by Hegel's thought. He was one of the most influential personalities in the philosophy of history and the study of historical change, and his approach was constructed on the same foundations as Hegel's: "the irresistible march of man's freedom."<sup>21</sup>

While Hegel used the dialectic of the mind, Marx used the dialectic of economic means when he identified economics, rather than politics, as the key that unlocks man's progress through the law of class struggle. In other words, irresistible economic forces governed men and determined trends in history.<sup>22</sup>

The Marxist approach was a declaration that history did not die, as Hegel proclaimed of the nation-state, but continued in a further stage that lies beyond capitalism: socialism. In the latter, society is classless and the Hegelian notion of state will be meaningless within the communist society where the desires of man are regulated based on the Communist manifesto.<sup>23</sup>

After that, just like Hegel proclaimed, history would end with the advent of Communism, which is the practical part of the Marxist ideology.

Both theorists made a deterministic dead end to history; for both, history reaches an end point beyond which it can go no further.<sup>24</sup>

For Marx, the factor of economic forces explains the historical change towards the supreme goal of a classless society.<sup>25</sup> Thus, needs and technical means constitute the axis of the forces of production; they determine the social relationships of a given civilization and characterize the civilization in its moral and material aspects.

The other prophet of the school of historical progress was the French philosopher August Comte. He was the intellectual heir of the supporter of the French Revolution, Saint Simon (1760-1825) in that both predicted the coming of the new age of human progress and rational understanding of the world, akin to a new religion.<sup>26</sup>

Comte was luckier to find a more prestigious position among the philosophers of history and sociologists. In his "positive philosophy" he proclaimed a redemptive message very similar to Hegel's.<sup>27</sup>

Influenced by progress, Comte applied Darwin's theory of evolution and the development of physical sciences to human conditions and historical change. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this notion pioneered a new explanation of human history in the era of "positive science."<sup>28</sup>

In his notion of the law of the three stages or states (*la loi des trois états*), Comte presented another periodization of the various states in human history. For Comte, mankind and the human mind passed successively through the theological (supernatural), the metaphysical (abstract), and the positive (scientific) state.<sup>29</sup>

In the theological state, everything was explained by supernatural beings and wills. In the metaphysical state, abstract occult causes took the place of supernatural beings, and everything was referred to vital forces, substantial forms, etc. Finally, in the positive state, science is the unique rule - everything is to be understood in light of the senses - verified science and "laws" or invariable relations between phenomena must replace both "wills" and "causes."<sup>30</sup>

From a historical point of view, the law of the three stages is, even in the field of knowledge of phenomena, a questionable and oversimplified generalization. Although Comte maintained that his law of three stages was the "abstract expression of general reality," he introduced no data that would have contested his theory.<sup>31</sup>

The main contribution of the school of historical progress, within the scope of this research, is the explanation of the historical movement, its stages and causes. In this regard, it is important to see how Bennabi perceived these contributions and how these explanations influenced his approach to civilization.

#### *(b) The Impact of the School of Historical Progress on Bennabi's Approach*

In Bennabi's view, the interpretation of the movement of civilization has been the subject matter of various schools within the philosophy of history during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many historians and philosophers studied the causes that govern the historical movement and



produced different interpretations of the course of history,<sup>32</sup> but were too slow in developing a systematic and comprehensive approach to analyze historical change.

He asserted that the majority of historians, from the Greek Thucydides (460 BC) to the French Guizot (1787-1874), directed their attention towards assembling historical events instead of developing a framework for providing a rational interpretation of these events.

With the coming of Guizot and thanks to the enlightenment era, the science of history begins to provide a kind of scientific interpretation. However, even with Guizot, there was a certain Cartesian reservation which prevented him from forming a thorough and systematic method.<sup>33</sup>

In his evaluation of historical movements Bennabi examined the contributions of Hegel, Marx, and Comte in particular,<sup>34</sup> and considered Hegel's view a reflection of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's political imagination on the role of state. However, he did not comprehensively review Hegel's contribution but reviewed the idea of contradiction which formulates, in Hegel's view, the motivating force that creates the historical movement and could generate its causes.<sup>35</sup>

Bennabi acknowledges Hegel's emphasis on the importance of the realm of ideas in history. Therefore, his concept of the religious idea (see Chapter Two) leads one to say that he shared the same view as Hegel in giving a leading role to ideas in motivating the movement of civilization.

Furthermore, Hegel ascribed every social change to the principle of contradiction between thesis and antithesis. Therefore, when the conflicting forces enter into interaction they generate an outcome of necessary infusion or synthesis. Those three phases govern every historical movement and constitute the process of social change.<sup>36</sup>

When Bennabi reviewed Marx's contribution, he considered that there was a link between the Hegelian notion of contradiction or dialectic and the Marxist approach which conceives that the contradictory causes that generate social changes are economic in nature.<sup>37</sup>

Instead of the ideas-based contradiction of Hegel, Marx's explanation of historical change is based on the materialist understanding of history. He considers the progress towards a better society the result of

the economic contradiction;<sup>38</sup> every historical movement that causes the birth of a civilization exists only as a result of the material necessities and the needs of man. This view, according to Bennabi, is too narrow and limited to some situations in Europe in the Victorian age.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, Marxism's focus on the material aspect of civilization led Marxists to give pre-eminence to the economic dimension; their interpretation is more "economistic," and historical change in the civilizing process within this Marxian paradigm is based on class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Therefore, the historical movement of civilization is merely the result of that dialectic class struggle.

Although Marx's approach pioneered to explain the social events within the framework of the phenomenon of civilization, it was too limited;<sup>40</sup> and if his heirs presented their approach in universal terms to reveal its generality and applicability to a wide range of human societies, they could not liberate their analysis from the spirit of Eurocentricism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup>

Marxist emphasis on human needs and technical means as the two poles of the modes of production, and the determinants of the type of social relationships of any civilization and the determinants of the essence of the civilization *per se*, morally and materially, led Bennabi to assert that this approach does not explain the fundamental question that arises during the destruction or breakdown of social relationships and the disintegration of civilizations where there was no change in the nature of human needs or the means of production.

For instance, it does not explain the disintegration and decline of the civilizations of the Americas before Columbus, nor the Roman civilization which did not disappear because of the poverty of human needs and technical means.

Thus, we find an interruption in the Marxist interpretation and explanation of historical events caused by overindulgence in methodology when explaining those events. That methodology starts from a materialistic predestination, from an unconscious mechanical process in planning civilization.<sup>42</sup>

It appears that the Marxist school's approach conceptualizes man as a machine or an unwilling being, and categorizes him as a one-dimensional being that exists bodily more than morally. Accordingly, Bennabi remarked that:

Marxist thought also neglects the essential notion of cycle by its assertion that social and historical processes move from the era of primitive animality to the era of abundance, consciousness and liberty, although the finalism implied in this perspective is contradicted by the very principle of the dialectic.<sup>43</sup>

Consequently, Marxist interpretation of history as an old method was limited by the historical circumstances of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe.<sup>44</sup> It was overarched during the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the advent of new approaches to the explanation of the genesis of civilization that opened the gates beyond the Marxist factors of human needs and technical means.<sup>45</sup>

Bennabi considered that the theory of human needs formulated by Marx is incapable of explaining the dynamics of the birth of a civilization. He argued that Marxists use a political periphrasis with their emphasis on "class consciousness." They ascribe a political character to the problem of civilization. He contends that the idea of human needs recalls the individualistic instinct of humans and involves competition and conflict. Therefore, every individual works for his own sake driven by biological rules.<sup>46</sup>

In other words, class-consciousness and the idea of human needs and material necessities do not lead to cooperation and integration but to more conflict and competitiveness among members of the society or community, which makes it more difficult to unite them towards a finality of their historical existence.

Bennabi argued that if we apply to the Marxist approach its own rules of economic factors, the limits of its explanation on the economic map of the world will clearly be revealed to us as follows: looking at the Marxist movement as an economic phenomenon will lead us to the conclusion that it actually corresponds to an economic zone representing the levels achieved by Japan, on the one hand, and England on the

other.<sup>47</sup> Bennabi explains the narrowness of the Marxist approach:

We can ascertain that, unless the contrary is proven, the expansion of the Communist doctrine is confined to the economic frontiers which correspond to certain geographical boundaries, and that beyond these limits Marxist thought has failed to meet with the conditions favorable for its adaptation. Therefore, it cannot provide us with a reasonable interpretation that can be soundly applied to the areas where it has not spread.<sup>48</sup>

The motivating force of history may explain certain histories, such as the European until the age of Hegel or Marx, but that notion, in its Hegelian and Marxist version, is biased and limited. It cannot be generalized and applied on human civilization in general because it ends the development of human history and brings it to a dead end. For instance, neither approach explains the genesis of Muslim civilization or its course in history.<sup>49</sup>

Bennabi considered Comte the initiator of modern sociology after the long sleep since the time of Ibn Khaldūn who was the father of sociology ten centuries before Comte.<sup>50</sup>

However, Bennabi was very critical of his positivistic vision of history. The very essential paradigm of positivism and Comte's law of the three states was for him a false generalization. It was possible to find inductively some indication for such a construction; however, any inductive result was understood and conceptualized in light of the erroneous positivist philosophy and there is no other knowledge than the knowledge of phenomena and the interpretation of sense-experience.<sup>51</sup> That is to say, Mathematical and physico-mathematical sciences, and all the different sciences of phenomena, constitute the only function of truth and real knowledge in human thought, and that, therefore, religion, mystical experience, metaphysics, and poetry are, in the civilized mind, an inheritance from the primitive and pre-logical mentality.<sup>52</sup>

Bennabi was influenced in many ways by the School of Historical Progress and its various approaches. He criticized it because in his view it is more theoretical than historical, it is based on Eurocentric



viewpoints that see the history of modern Europe as the culmination of the progress of human history without any critical analysis of the various civilizational experiences.

Furthermore, it presents approaches that focus on some variables of historical change and neglects the complexity of civilization as a multifaceted phenomenon.

Bennabi acknowledged Hegelians' ideas as catalysts in changing history, and praised Marxists for their dialectical analysis. However, he argued that the School was not related to the nature of civilization and criticized it in terms of the limitations in its method, concepts, and perspectives.

So Bennabi was influenced by the School's general approach on the universal process of civilization, at least at its theoretical level, on the general pattern of historical change, on the search for a motivating force behind the movement of history, and on the use of highly abstract concepts that denote the intention and awareness of its thinkers on the metaphysical aspect of civilization.

Bennabi's weight on the importance of universal connection led him to read and critically review the contributions of various philosophers of history including those mentioned of the School of Historical Progress. They helped him to understand and uncover the universal framework of civilization,<sup>53</sup> and build his interdisciplinary approach.

## (2) The Cyclical School: Contribution and Impact on Bennabi's Approach

This section will discuss the contribution and impact of the Cyclical school on Bennabi's approach: its various perspectives, the cyclical phenomenon, the stages of civilizational movement, and the force that motivates history.

Ibn Khaldūn and Toynbee were the leading scholars of this school, although they varied in their approaches to civilization, but here more emphasis will be given on a comparison of Bennabi's ideas with theirs.

The reason behind the special focus is Bennabi's penchant for the same school they adopt based on the cyclical conception of the course of civilization, and because he felt he was successor of them.<sup>54</sup>

### (a) Contributions of the Cyclical School to the Study of Civilization

The cyclical school is, as Sanderson mentions, distinctive and unique among historians not only for distinguishing patterns in historical change, but also in conceptualizing these patterns as being largely cyclical in nature.<sup>55</sup>

Civilizations go through the process of birth, growth, breakdown, disintegration and decline, and exhibit a common pattern of development and decay.<sup>56</sup> The school's approaches differ in their answers regarding the units to be adopted to analyze and write history: they also considered a civilization as the intelligible unit to study history. Thus, Sanderson termed "civilizationists" those who adopt civilizational approaches to history.<sup>57</sup>

Another feature of this school is its methodology, which is mainly the comparative study of various civilizations. That is, the leading figures of this school such as Ibn Khaldūn, Spengler, Toynbee, Sorokin and others were concerned with a comparative analysis and examination of historical developments in various civilizations.<sup>58</sup>

Scholars arrived at universal patterns of historical change after examining historians' data. They extrapolated from certain experiences about the formation and development of civilizations, and considered human societies in movement toward civilizing objectives like organisms in the biological world. In essence, they made an analogy between the life process (birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and death) of living organisms and civilizations.

Scholars' other concern was over the multifaceted nature of civilizations as socio-historical and cultural entities. They mentioned the presence of the religious idea with different conceptions: religion besides the spirit of solidarity ('*Aṣabiyyah*)<sup>59</sup> in Ibn Khaldūn's approach, the challenge and response in Toynbee's approach, and the religious idea in Bennabi's approach.

### (1a) Ibn Khaldūn's Contribution to the Study of Civilization

In *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn pioneered an investigation of history to detect its laws and patterns. His study on the nature of society and social change led him to develop what he called '*Ilm al-Umrān*, the science of civilization.'<sup>60</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn caused a shift in the study of human conditions. He was aware of the patterns that govern the movement of human conditions in history, and perceived that the mere chronicling of events was at best a beginning task for the historian. What was needed was the explanatory and analytical aspect of those events, so in *The Muqaddimah* he shifted the study of history from the mere chronicling of events to an explanation and identification of the patterns of change in history (*tabaddul*).<sup>61</sup>

He was acquainted with the basic principles of analyzing the civilizing and decivilizing processes. Lauer identifies those principles as follows:

- 1) Social phenomena follow lawful patterns. 2) Laws are operative at the societal level. 3) Laws in the social process must be discovered by gathering much data and observing relationships among the variables. 4) Similar social laws are operative in societies that are structurally similar. 5) Societies are characterized by change. 6) Laws that apply to the change are sociological, not biological or physical in nature.<sup>62</sup>

Lauer's mentioned principles of studying the social phenomena were present in Ibn Khaldūn's work. As a matter of fact, Ibn Khaldūn's study of history was first conceptualized through the use of "states and dynasties" as the intelligible units of analysis, and through the study of states, he developed his concept of stages and cycle.

Relying on his own experience and his knowledge of Muslim history he found that states throughout Muslim history come and go, and everyone has followed a cyclical life span that undertakes certain stages from birth to death.<sup>63</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn conceptualized the life cycle (birth, growth, and death) as a universal pattern common to all organisms,<sup>64</sup> and applied it to the life span of the state (dynasty) which is an organism that is born and goes through the life cycle, ending with decline and death -birth, development, and disintegration.<sup>65</sup> The state consists of humans, thus its life span is affected by their life period and lives for three generations, each equal to the age at which an individual reaches a mature age (forty years).<sup>66</sup>

In addition to the three stages, Ibn Khaldūn discussed a fourth stage as follows:

The first is the founding generation where the primitive and the sedentary Bedouin life characterize the stage. 'Aṣabiyyah is still at its zenith and its members (the tribe) still adhere to tribal customs and simple life. They share the power and glory they achieved among them.<sup>67</sup>

The second generation witnesses the advent of a sedentary lifestyle that takes over the simple Bedouin life. The members of the 'Aṣabiyyah gradually shift from a state of hardship to a well-established life and continue to develop the state until they reach luxury and fertility. Then, they move from a sharing spirit to the absolutism of the ruler.<sup>68</sup> After that, the 'Aṣabiyyah starts losing its motivating power and its binding feature and witnesses the beginning of its fracture. Although its members lost some characteristics of the first generation, they are still keen to reclaim the glories of their predecessors.<sup>69</sup>

In the third generation the members of 'Aṣabiyyah completely forget the Bedouin life with its characteristics, and forget the motives of bravery and courage. The culture of luxury spreads and reaches its culmination in this generation, while society enters into extravagant lifestyles that seek comfort and self indulgence. The spirit of solidarity the 'Aṣabiyyah offers loses its binding and motivating force. Therefore, the members of society become cowards and are unable to defend their society against its enemies. Consequently, the ruler uses others instead of his 'Aṣabiyyah members to defend the state, and the state starts to die.

In the fourth generation the links of lineage disappear, the 'Aṣabiyyah disintegrates, and the state is defeated and collapses.

So we see that Ibn Khaldūn divided the life span into three general generations, but when he discussed the features of each he added a fourth which, with some analysis, is not a generation to be added to the previous rather than extension of the third stage.

Ibn Khaldūn further divided the process of civilization or "the state," into five stages. The birth stage corresponds to the first generation; the domination and luxury stages to the second generation; the beginning of decline corresponds to the third, and the last stage of decline corresponds to the fourth generation.<sup>70</sup>



Ibn Khaldūn's cycle of states and dynasties would not be understood without his concept of *'Aṣabiyyah*, the force that motivates historical change in the rise, growth, and disintegration of dynasties and states; but *'Aṣabiyyah* alone does not create substantial development, and in order for the group to maintain dominance and build a big dynasty it also needs the religious idea.<sup>71</sup>

At the inception of state building the *'Aṣabiyyah*, helps to bind members of the group to each other and makes them defend the state. However, because the *'Aṣabiyyah* has both the binding and competing aspects, it needs a religious idea which prevents people from indulging in self-profit, competition, and mutual envy, and guides their efforts towards the right.<sup>72</sup>

In counterpoint, the religious idea would not accomplish its objectives without the presence of the *'Aṣabiyyah* which supports, carries, and defends it. For Ibn Khaldūn, it was the case of all prophets who depended on groups and families, although Allah supported them with all living things.<sup>73</sup>

The quest for universal patterns in history, the cyclical movement of dynasties and states, and the notion of *'Aṣabiyyah* were Ibn Khaldūn's leading ideas that made a clear contribution to the study of civilization.

Arnold Toynbee was another supporter of the cyclical school of civilization that in one way or another had an impact on Bennabi's approach.

#### *(2a) Toynbee's Contribution to the Study of Civilization*

In *A Study of History*, Arnold Toynbee<sup>74</sup> undertook a comparative study of civilizations to establish the laws governing their development, and to give a theory of the nature and destiny of civilizations.<sup>75</sup>

He viewed world history as a sequence of civilizations, and the intelligible units of historical study are not nations or periods but "societies;" "not mankind as a whole, but certain groupings of humanity which we have called a society (civilization)."<sup>76</sup>

Toynbee reached this conclusion after examining English history, and found that this history is part of the "whole" which contains only parts (England, France...) and is related to other parts in time and space.

Subsequently, the "whole" can be identified in space and time, and the parts of that "whole" are subject to identical stimuli or challenges. Moreover, the "whole" to which England belongs is identified as "Western Christendom;" its extension in space at different dates, and its origins in time are measured.<sup>77</sup> Toynbee applied his theory to the civilizations of the world. This enabled him to identify, analyze, describe, and examine the rise and fall of more than twenty civilizations in the course of human history.<sup>78</sup>

He also considered civilizations the result of the dialectic relationship between challenge and response in which the cycle witnesses stages of growth and decline. Growth occurs when the response to a particular challenge is not only successful in itself but causes a further challenge which again meets with a successful response.

Furthermore, growth has two symptoms: an increasing control over the human environment (conquest of neighboring people), and an increasing control over the physical environment, which is expressed in an improvement in material techniques. Decline, in turn, has two stages: breakdown and disintegration; breakdown means loss of control or the lapse of freedom into automatism.<sup>79</sup>

Toynbee assumed that the breakdown stage has its own symptoms and causes that distinguish it from disintegration. Those symptoms may be seen in the failure of the creative power of the creative minority which becomes a merely "dominant" minority,<sup>80</sup> in response to the withdrawal of adherence and mimesis on the part of the majority, and in the loss of social unity in society as a whole.

The real cause of decline is the failure of self-determination when the uncreative majority begins to follow the leadership of creative leaders by mechanical and superficial imitation.

Then, the leaders may become infected with the mechanicalness of their followers, and the result will be an "arrested" civilization. In that case, the creative minority becomes the dominant minority and the majority becomes an alienated proletariat. Consequently, society is on the road to disintegration and loses the capacity for self-determination.

Finally, the disintegration stage of civilization marks the schism of the social body into three fractions: the dominant minority, the internal proletariat, and the external proletariat.

When the creative minority loses its creativity it will become dominant and oppressive towards the majority which, in turn, will be in its mechanical imitation to the will of the dominant minority. As a result, the majority will lose its relationship with the culture of society, and the external proletariat will feel itself the enemy of the declining society.

Toynbee's explanation of the force behind historical change was put under the formula of "challenge and response" that generates another and different challenge which meets with another successful response.

The challenge that brought civilizations into existence must have come primarily not from geographical factors but from their human environment, i.e., from the "Dominant Minorities" of the societies to which they are affiliated. To this challenge the internal and external "Proletariats" of the failing civilization respond by seceding from it and thereby laying the foundations of a new civilization.

There is no term to this process of growth unless a challenge arises which the civilization in question fails to meet, a tragic event, which means a cessation of growth. The latter marks the breakdown of the civilizing process and the beginning of the opposite process of decivilizing (decline). The challenge has not been met, but it nonetheless continues to present itself.

A second convulsive effort is made to meet it, and, if this succeeds, growth will be resumed. However, after a partial and temporary success, this response likewise fails.<sup>81</sup>

Toynbee's ideas were very important in the development of Bennabi's approach. Toynbee emphasized the very nature of civilization as the "whole" or the intelligible unit of the study of historical change. He was one of the pioneers of the idea of the cyclical process of history, and his formula of "challenge and response" which states that an obstacle of an economic or technical nature poses a challenge to society and requires that society respond. But this formula of "challenge and response" led Bennabi to severely criticize him, because of Toynbee's determinist view of the unescaped process of decline once civilization is in that stage. Toynbee's determinist view of the process of civilization is apparent. Although he hoped for the process of growth to be resumed, he saw it as only partial and temporary. Like Ibn Khaldūn, he

was another determinist who conceptualized a civilizing process that must end in the breakdown and decline of civilization.

Before the total decline there will be an attempt to recover, followed by failure, followed by another attempt, followed by failure...etc. After some signs of success a final failure disbands society.

Ibn Khaldūn's general theory of the rise and fall of states and dynasties, and Toynbee's civilizations were brought to Bennabi's attention when he came in contact with the works of the former at an early age in Algeria, and with the works of the latter when he was in Paris.<sup>82</sup>

### (b) *The Impact of the Cyclical School on Bennabi's Approach*

#### (1b) *Ibn Khaldūn's Impact*

In secondary school Bennabi came in contact with Ibn Khaldūn's *The Muqaddimah*. This was to be the source throughout his entire intellectual career, especially after he dedicated his life to the study of civilization. He saw it, like Ibn Khaldūn, as a phenomenon that should be treated in an analytical way to uncover its patterns.<sup>83</sup>

Many scholars agree that Bennabi was the second Ibn Khaldūn in his ideas, method, and concern.<sup>84</sup> Bennabi himself attributed some of his core ideas to Ibn Khaldūn,<sup>85</sup> and acknowledged his contribution to the development of philosophy of history, especially the idea of the cyclical movement of civilization. He also proclaimed that Ibn Khaldūn is the genius who discovered the pattern of history, and the father and master of Arab sociology in the Middle Ages.

He contends that Ibn Khaldūn was the first historian to discover the logic in the historical development of history because before him "history was a continuous series of events." Ibn Khaldūn gave "a new perspective to history, since he linked history with the idea of causality that denotes his awareness about the meaning of continuity of events."<sup>86</sup>

Both the notions of causality in history and the cycle of civilization were points that attracted Bennabi's attention and criticism of Ibn Khaldūn.

In *Islam in History and Society*, Bennabi states that Ibn Khaldūn, probably inspired by Islamic psychological factors, "disentangled the



notion of cycle in his theory of the three generations,<sup>87</sup> and raises two points:

First, Ibn Khaldūn was restricted by political terms that reduced his pioneering ideas. Therefore, the terminology (of state, dynasty and tribe as well as *ʿAṣabiyyah*) "masks the profoundness of the idea by reducing the dimensions of a civilization to the scale of the dynasty."<sup>88</sup>

Second, although Ibn Khaldūn's term *ʿAṣabiyyah* is narrow, it invites us to emphasize the transitory aspect of civilization. Using *ʿAṣabiyyah* and interpreting the movement of the rise and fall of dynasties, although it reduced the dimensions of a civilization to one of its products, carried in its womb a profound idea of the transitory or the cyclical course of civilization.<sup>89</sup>

A full approach to civilization was hidden and masked by the lack of terminology in Ibn Khaldūn's time. As Bennabi asserts in the following extract:

It is possible that Ibn Khaldūn was the first to extricate the pattern of the historical and civilizational movement. Unfortunately, the terminology of his age stopped him at one of the products of civilization, which is the state, instead of civilization itself. Consequently, we did not find in what Ibn Khaldūn has left more than a theory about the development of state, whilst it would have been useful if his theory had presented to us the development of civilization itself.<sup>90</sup>

In Bennabi's view, the notion of the cyclical movement allows the discussion not only of the conditions of progressive development, but also the factors of decline although Ibn Khaldūn did not perceive a complete method to approach the phenomenon of civilization.<sup>91</sup>

Bennabi was influenced by Ibn Khaldūn's general approach to historical change and his quest for universal terms to understand the course of civilization, and differed from him on the intelligible unit of study, on the life span of civilization, and the motivating force.

Bennabi went beyond Ibn Khaldūn's state as the intelligible unit of socio-historical study, when he considered "state" a product of civilization to use civilization itself as the unit of historical study.<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, while Ibn Khaldūn gave a specific life span to the state while Bennabi left it open with a focus on the dynamism and transitory nature of civilization.<sup>93</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn's other leading idea was the motivating force that gives birth to the civilizing process, although the meaning differs.

Ibn Khaldūn sees that human civilization in its motion has patterns and follows constant laws. Those patterns he called *Ṭabāʾī al-Umrān*, patterns of civilization.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the changes that occur throughout history have a motivating force behind them called *ʿAṣabiyyah*, which is the psychosocial bond that ties members of the group and is based on kinship or common religion.<sup>95</sup>

Bennabi developed the notion of the religious idea when he studied anthropological and historical records. In addition to the Qur'an, the archaeological findings were among the main sources that helped him to establish his idea of the presence of religion in the historical development of human civilization, and to postulate the religious idea as the motivator of the civilizing process.<sup>96</sup>

Another point on which their views differed was whether the historical process of the rise and fall of civilizations is open or determined. Ibn Khaldūn's conception of the cyclical movement of dynasties and his analogy of the age of the state with humans was determinist. He postulated a civilization as the culmination of the process of growth of the dynasty or the state that in turn marks the beginning of the unavoidable end.

Ibn Khaldūn's organicist view led him to consider that humans and dynasties have the same life span, although their durations may differ according to the conjunctions. However, he considered the life span he conceptualised a rule beyond which no dynasty may go. If the dynasty reaches the fourth stage, the decline becomes unavoidable and the resumption of growth cannot happen.<sup>97</sup>

Bennabi, on the other hand, rejected the determinist view of history. Social phenomena were not like physical phenomena, and historical movement is a patterned movement. However, the latter does not mean a deterministic view of history. Rather, those patterns governing the socio-historical phenomena are not absolute determinism. They pose a certain challenge to the human will to which he has to respond

creatively in order to liberate himself from a narrowly conceived causality.<sup>98</sup>

Bennabi saw that Ibn Khaldūn's conceptions, although they opened our minds to see the transitory and dynamic aspect of civilization, were formulated in biological terms such as human life span and generation.

In the biological process internal contradictions lead the being to his/her development and then to his/her disintegration. However, in the social phenomena this fatality is limited or conditioned because the direction and the term of evolution depend on the psycho-temporal factors on which an organized society could act, to a certain extent, by regulating its life and by pursuing certain means in a coherent way.<sup>99</sup>

In other words, whatever the existential conditions of a society, they can be traced to the psyche of its members.<sup>100</sup> If those members could change their realm of ideas according to their religious ideal, they would be able to enter into the civilizing process. In this key (as seen in Chapter Three), we can understand Bennabi's assertion on the predominance of ideas as well as the postulation that humans are the most important device of civilization. Thus, for Bennabi the change in human souls is prior to any socio-historical change of the human condition, and there is no determination in historical change.

#### (2b) *Toynbee's Impact on Bennabi's Approach*

Bennabi became acquainted with Toynbee's thought when he was in France studying at the polytechnic (see Chapter Four). Toynbee's notion of "challenge and response" influenced Bennabi and led him to critically review his work, particularly his interpretation of the historical movement of civilization.

Bennabi saw that the Marxist approach stopped at a certain point without further advancement or achievement. It failed to meet with the geographical and economic conditions favorable for its adaptation. Therefore, it cannot provide us with a reasonable interpretation that can be soundly applied to the areas where it has not spread; where Islam spread its principles.<sup>101</sup>

Therefore Bennabi made a link: Toynbee's interpretation could contribute where the Marxist could not because Toynbee was able to clearly define the limits within which the Marxist view failed to deliver any significant answer.

The formulation of "challenge and response" imposes itself on the conscience of individuals and groups, and the response to it correlates to the degree of significance and stimulation it contains. Thus, "there is equivalence between the nature of stimulation and the attitude that the human conscience takes as a response."<sup>102</sup>

However, Bennabi debates that if we assume the challenge to be inferior to the level Toynbee considered as the optimum, the response to it will be weak; therefore the change will not be initiated. In other words, when the challenge is unable to stimulate the conscience of individuals or groups, there will be no response to it, and no historical change will occur.<sup>103</sup>

Consequently, there is also a limit to what Toynbee calls the optimum challenge that entails a sufficient response worth motivating the forces of change. The effectiveness of the response is in relation to the degree of challenge; when the challenge arises, the response increases accordingly. However, what happens when the challenge exceeds the "optimum" level mentioned by Toynbee?

In demonstrating the major stages in the history of humankind, Toynbee positioned the process of historical change between two frontiers beyond which it no longer occurred. Toynbee took the Upper Nile region and the Eskimo as example of two societies that remained in a state of stagnation because their challenge was either above or below the optimum level. He showed how the insufficiency, the excessiveness, and severity of the challenge affected in the same direction forces in the history of humankind. However, the two examples did not help him to apply that formula to all civilizations,<sup>104</sup> particularly where the rise of Muslim civilization is concerned.

Furthermore, among five basic challenges in *A Study of History*<sup>105</sup> Toynbee's emphasis on the geographical challenge above others, especially in the two examples mentioned, led Bennabi to criticize him for oversimplifying the causes of the civilizing movement.<sup>106</sup> He echoes this criticism in *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*.

Bennabi mainly analyzed and criticized the geographical challenge. In fact, he did not go to the extent of analyzing the other types of challenge because he was influenced by the idea of challenge itself and its conception of the two limits that place the conscience of the individual and the group within an interval of positive response.



Therefore, he borrowed Toynbee's idea of "challenge" to use it in the context of spiritual challenge of the "religious idea" that explains the birth, evolution, and collapse of Muslim civilization, as presented in Chapter Four.<sup>107</sup>

Bennabi had one last criticism on Toynbee's determinist view regarding the irreversible process of birth, growth, breakdown, and decline of civilization. Although Toynbee contributed to the study of civilizations and produced a remarkable treatise, his determinism was a weak point in his approach which in history is not justified as in the natural sciences.<sup>108</sup>

Toynbee's use of civilization as the unit of historical analysis, his notion of the cycle, and mainly his formulation of challenge and response were most influential on Bennabi's approach (see Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison between Bennabi, Ibn Khaldūn, and Toynbee.

Ideas	Bennabi	Ibn Khaldūn	Toynbee
Motivator	Religious idea	Mainly the <i>ʿAshabiyyah</i> + religion	Religions
Determinism	Non-determinist	Determinist	Determinist
Types of Society	Natural society Historical society	Bedouin Sedentary	Primitive Civilized
Causes of decline	Breakdown of social relations network; breakdown of the religious idea from its ideal; colonizability	Luxury; the decline of <i>ʿAshabiyyah</i> ; the absence of religious restraint ( <i>waʿzi</i> )	Severity of the challenge; transformation of the creative elite to a dominant elite; absence of a universal church
Stages	Pre-civilized, civilized, post-civilized	Three generations: birth, growth, death	Growth, breakdown, disintegration, decline

Not only that, he was influenced by philosophy of history in the study of civilization and was aware of underlying assumptions and meta-physical priorities. He borrowed terms and concepts as well as the very notion of the cyclical phenomenon of civilization but formulated them in a distinctive style that reveals his openness and ability to transform and integrate them into his own system.

In his analysis of the various schools, Bennabi showed his dissatisfaction with their interpretations, although he paid great attention to studying their contributions and acknowledged the benefit he derived from them.

Ibn Khaldūn and Toynbee's influence is present in all his analysis. This underscores Bennabi's partiality toward the school of cyclical movement of civilization. Nevertheless, he disagreed with both of them on the deterministic and dramatic end of the civilizing process. Unlike biological organisms, he believed that the end of historical change or the course of civilization is not predetermined but related to its human agent and his ability to re-direct the course of history.

In other words, although a civilization has a general pattern it does not mean that it eventually dies, especially in our modern times where the delineation between civilizations becomes more and more indistinct, and the ability of a universal framework for civilization is growing day after day.<sup>109</sup>

Most schools did not present a methodological interpretation of the force behind birth, rise, and decline of Muslim civilization, but Bennabi formulated his approach after he reviewed earlier works available to him on the subject.

Given that his main concern was to find a systematic pattern to resolve theoretically and empirically his contemporary situation, Bennabi admitted that if we applied any of those approaches to the interpretation of Muslim civilization, they would not satisfy us completely because, by all accounts, we could not see any emergence of civilization out of natural or geographic challenges based on Toynbee's method. Nor could we find an explanation based on the Marxist approach that gives importance to material and technical factors. Hence, Muslim civilization was neither the result of natural nor economic factors.

As the author has illustrated in Chapters two and three, Bennabi presented his interpretation of the movement of civilization using his concept of religious ideas as catalyst for the necessary ingredients of civilization and contributor to an environment for the dynamic interaction of man, soul, and time in order to initiate the civilizing process of any society. That is, he assigned socio-historical change to the initial drive given by a religious idea.

Consequently, he determined that "whether we are dealing with Islamic or Christian society, or with fossilized societies, or those that have disappeared, we can ascertain that what inspired their seeds throughout the entirety of human history is a religious idea."<sup>110</sup>

#### THE PARADIGM OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Compared with the paradigm of philosophy of history and its various schools and approaches to the study of civilization, the paradigm of social sciences is the relatively new product of developments within the paradigm of philosophy that has distinctive features. Since its inception in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this paradigm tends to ignore philosophical contemplative matters and focuses on the applied and empirical investigation of phenomena.<sup>111</sup>

In the following section, the discussion will focus on diverse approaches within this paradigm, Bennabi's view of the social scientists' contribution to the study of civilization, and Bennabi's socio-scientific contribution.

The discussion on the paradigm of social sciences is different from that of philosophy of history because it is new to the study of civilization, and Bennabi himself did not rely much on an existing socio-scientific literature he considered to be in its early stage and not mature enough to be adopted.

##### (1) Varied Perspectives

History of the social sciences shows a great variety of approaches.<sup>112</sup> With the advent of its western version, the basic unit of analysis has been societal, whether social formation, mode of production, nation-

state, or simply society.<sup>113</sup> The social sciences do not have an exclusive picture of what occurred in history; rather, they encounter difficulty in developing a representation and in identifying the dominant paradigms within the general paradigm of social sciences.<sup>114</sup> Consequently under the umbrella of the social sciences there are different sub-paradigms, approaches, and schools related to its various disciplines.

Sociology, for example, as defined by its leading figures, is a social science concerned with the systematic study of human society. Since Comte's first use of the term "sociology," this field of research assigned itself to the positivistic assumption of the social world.

Comte assigned the term "social physics" to sociology with an underlying assumption that its methodology is empirical, although Comte himself, Karl Marx, Durkheim, and Max Weber (1864-1920) were more theoretical than empirical sociologists.<sup>115</sup>

Therefore, much of the work of sociologists is devoted to the study of one or another of the many different component parts of societies (e.g., individuals, families, communities, and classes) and to specific features and problems (e.g., crime, race relations, religion, politics). However, sociologists are involved in more than these topics. They focus also on human societies themselves.<sup>116</sup>

Consequently, divergent sociological perspectives characterize sociology.<sup>117</sup> Several broad perspectives regarding social change have been formulated and developed by social scientists, and starting from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, several approaches have appeared.

With some simplification, it is possible to find out until Bennabi's time some major broad perspectives (paradigms) within social sciences. They are mainly 1) the functional broad perspective, 2) the bio-ecological broad perspective, 3) the evolutionary broad perspective, and 4) the structuralist perspective theories. Each of these has, of course, many variants in accordance with the dualism and polar opposites that have encompassed social sciences, in general, and sociology, in particular.

Among those opposites were the conflict-consensus, stability-change, structure-action, subjective-objective, and materialist-idealist, as well as macro-micro.<sup>118</sup>



The following section traces the impact of the social sciences on Bennabi's approach to see how he viewed their contribution to the issue of civilization.

## (2) Bennabi's Views on the Contribution of Social Scientists

Bennabi acknowledged that although social scientists lack the precision of the natural or physical sciences, they contributed methodologically to the study of human conditions.<sup>119</sup> However, he was very critical of the various schools and approaches.

Bennabi was aware of the status of the social sciences of his time, aware of their theoretical background, and saw the compartmentalization of knowledge into specialized disciplines, a trend that emerged toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although its origins date back to Cartesian philosophy.

He also saw the influence of the natural sciences that stimulated and molded the development of the social sciences to the point of segregating them and undermining their integrative way of looking at social phenomena in general, and that part of it that has a historical dimension, like the phenomenon of civilization.

However, this did not undermine the great achievements of the social sciences in studying social phenomena. Bennabi saw that the methodology of this discipline was not mature enough to be more precise, it had not yet achieved a level of development as to provide universally applicable definitions for their concepts and terms. It could only provide a general framework for research in social issues: "The rule in sociology is not like that of mathematics or natural sciences. It does not make a clear boarder between what is right and what is wrong. It is only a general orientation that helps to prevent big mistakes."<sup>120</sup> To this end, he created his own sociological views to study civilization and its various issues.

Unlike the natural sciences, modern sociology exhibits concepts that at times are confusing and ambiguous in a reader's mind, particularly a Muslims'.<sup>121</sup>

Bennabi was not satisfied with the status of the social sciences, especially sociology. Thus, his critical evaluation of the achievements of

sociological approaches led him to argue that there is a need for a "special sociology" to study the current Muslim civilization, especially in the postcolonial countries of the Muslim world.<sup>122</sup>

As some writers pointed out, Bennabi's call for a new sociology for the study of Muslim societies was based on two levels. First, the ontological-epistemological level encompasses the modern social sciences and forms the underlying theoretical structure of the philosophical assumption that they were developed under Western orientation. The latter, in turn, ontologically avoids the presence of the metaphysical dimension in the human personality and the metaphysical dimension of history. Furthermore only a materialistic Western-centered outlook considers modern Western social sciences universal and unquestionable.<sup>123</sup> Second, the practical level relates to the efforts of reform in the Muslim world in relation to its present situation that needs a specific science to study it according to the parameters of Muslim civilization. Its main objective analyzes the internal and external causes of decline in the Muslim civilization, and emphasizes the social reality of Muslim societies.<sup>124</sup>

Bennabi avows that this new sociology must have a distinctive methodology, although it may borrow some techniques from contemporary social sciences. This methodology should include qualitative and quantitative dimensions:

a comprehensive methodology that includes both statistics and interpretation. In other words, this science should take into consideration the analysis of the abnormal cases, and should examine their origins and their historical roots.<sup>125</sup>

To put it more clearly, modern social sciences have evolved and taken shape, according to Bennabi, within the Western historical and civilizational context; therefore they are colored by the specific experience of Western societies. For that matter, they derived their main concepts and categories from the cultural and philosophical foundations of that experience.<sup>126</sup>

Moreover, social problems and phenomena have their own history and different courses of development peculiar to the cultural and

civilizational context in which they arise.<sup>127</sup> Bennabi strongly emphasizes that any attempt to disregard this truth and indulge in mere plagiarism is ignorance and suicide.<sup>128</sup>

The previous criticisms, however, should not be understood as a total refusal to accept the modern social sciences. Rather, it was an epistemological attitude toward the current dominant paradigms and schools of thought within the social sciences during his time.

He was aware of their philosophical and metaphysical premises that prevent them from being universal and applicable to his case study, Muslim civilization. Therefore, he was not restricted to a specific school or approach to undertake his sociological study of the issues of socio-historical and socio-cultural change.

Certain terms and concepts of the social sciences and the fact that he shared ideas with some sociologists and some schools cannot be overlooked in his approach. For instance, viewpoints of disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, psychology and even geography are systematically employed in his analysis and dissection of human society and civilization.<sup>129</sup>

While Bennabi's intellectual legacy includes these sciences, it is only through the analysis of the content of his work that we may compare some of his ideas with the dominant ideas of his time because he was "a free thinker who believed that his own philosophical and sociological insights and observations liberated him from pedantic obligations."<sup>130</sup>

Bennabi's approach was influenced by the social sciences at the methodological and technical level in its formulation and development, in the analysis of social events of his time, and in his discussion of the role of religion in the civilizing process. It can be seen also in the definition of society and the use of the structuralist-functionalist mode of analysis, in the conceptualization of civilization, and in his analysis of the ingredients of the civilizing action.

### (3) Bennabi's Contribution from the Social Scientific Point of View

#### (a) *The Starting Point of Analysis*

Bennabi's formulation and development of his approach to civilization

was not merely theoretical but a social reality – the conditions of the Muslim civilization – in need of analysis and solutions. That was the sociological starting point to resolve the predicament; a deep understanding of the human being, his capabilities and weaknesses, and a conscious search for the social values of Islam. Sociology and psychology are necessary to discover values inherent to and new ways adopted by Muslim renaissance. They also help to underscore divergences caused by myths inherited from the post-*al-Muwahhid* era.<sup>131</sup> Bennabi did not name specific sociologists whose theories he adopted, but various approaches from the social sciences are very clear in his sociology.

#### (b) *Typology and Definition of Society*

As pointed out in Chapter Two, Bennabi considered anthropologists' typology of human societies and social groupings – the reference here is to the French anthropologist Levy-Bruhl (1857–1939) limited and biased. He criticized terms such as "primitive society" and "civilized society" used by ethnology in particular,<sup>132</sup> and offered his own definitions: "historical society" and "natural society."<sup>133</sup>

He was concerned more with "historical societies" that present dynamics subject to the patterns of change throughout history.<sup>134</sup> They have two subtypes: the geographical society whose birth takes place in response to challenges posed by natural circumstances, and the ideational or ideological society that comes into existence in response to the appeal of a certain ideal.

Unlike anthropologists, Bennabi excluded the natural stationary societies from his definition of society because in his opinion society is a dynamic phenomenon.<sup>135</sup>

The descriptive definition must be accompanied by the dialectical to define the meaning of society with reference to the factor of time.<sup>136</sup> The latter helps to consider society as the group that changes its structure throughout history in order to accomplish its historical objectives. Thus, any group that does not change or progress throughout time is excluded from the dialectical definition of the term "society."<sup>137</sup>

While Bennabi differs from the anthropologists' typology and definition of society, he does not differ from the sociologists like Comte



and his focus on social dynamics,<sup>138</sup> and Durkheim in his structuralist-functional methodological methodology.<sup>139</sup>

(c) *The Social Function of Religion*

Bennabi sees religion as the synthesizer of social values and the catalyst that provides the atmosphere for the primary ingredients of civilization to enter into a dynamic interaction. He tackled the factor of religion from two integrative aspects: on the one hand, religion is a cosmic pattern of human personality with the mission to link earth to heaven, that is, to provide the spiritual and the ideal which extend the human vision beyond its earthly potential. On the other hand, religion is a factor that unites members of society to enter into the social relations network.

Bennabi differs with modern sociologists on the first aspect because in their positivistic and materialist assumptions they ignore the metaphysical dimension of religion. They are more concerned with its role in society than with its divine origin or mission.

Let's take Durkheim as an example of the sociologists' view of religion during Bennabi's time. In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, he considered that the role of religion in society is to deter individuals from certain acts. Religion does not furnish moral precepts; it simply reflects those that society embraces. Collective conscience condemns certain acts, not God. Thus, religion does not have a divine origin but reflects the collective secular conscience of society. Furthermore, those things that religion holds "sacred" derive their special status from the service they render in preserving social solidarity.<sup>140</sup> Beliefs and sentiments form the collective conscience of society:

The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life; one may call it the collective or common conscience ... It is, therefore, an entirely different thing from particular consciences, although it can be realized only through them.<sup>141</sup>

Durkheim viewed the moral system a product of society, a cultural system that plays the role of determining what is moral and immoral in society.

The other leading sociologist who gave religion an important place was the German Max Weber (1864-1920). Although it is not clear whether Bennabi read Weber's works, some similarities on the importance of religious ideas in the development of human civilization are unavoidable.

Both examined various civilizations and various religious traditions, but Bennabi linked the birth of civilization to the advent of the religious idea, while Weber linked the religious idea to the development of capitalism. He was mainly concerned with economic development. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber did not confine the impact of Protestantism to economic greed, but focused more on the moral and ethical system it provided. The latter stresses economic success.<sup>142</sup>

(d) *The Cyclical Conception of Change*

Although the discussion of the cyclical phenomenon of civilization has been discussed under the section on the philosophy of history, it is important to discuss it here in relation to the social sciences and sociological tradition that steered away from philosophical contemplation and theoretical assumptions about historical change.

A comparison between Sorokin and Bennabi points out the various ideas Bennabi elaborated.

Rather than a comparative historian, Sorokin was professionally a historical sociologist who focused on large-scale structures and among the few sociologists who acknowledged as early as the 1930s that change over long periods of time could be studied sociologically. He was severely critical of the philosophers of history, and especially of Toynbee for his concept and categorization of civilizations.<sup>143</sup>

For Sorokin, civilizations are not logically or meaningfully integrated wholes, but "congeries."<sup>144</sup> In *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, he applied quantitative methods to historical material, and generated propositions about Western civilization that have predictive as well as explanatory value.<sup>145</sup>

He adopted the idea of the cyclical movement of civilization, and presented his explanation of the historical change of "cultural super systems," civilizations he presumed identifiable primarily in terms of

some central organizing principle that was essentially a mode of human thought and feeling.<sup>146</sup>

The course of civilization, according to Sorokin, passes through a cycle of three phases: the ideational, the sensate, and the idealistic phase.<sup>147</sup> They cover long periods and at the same time form types of culture and a cultural mentality that marks each societal period.

The ideational phase views reality as essentially non-material, and focuses on spiritual needs and objectives, while the sensate phase views reality as basically material, in which the most important human needs are those relating to the body. The good consists in the maximum satisfaction in these material needs.

The motto for this cultural mentality at the second phase is the enjoyment and exploitation of life which is considered short. This phase is notorious for its attempt to dominate, control, and master both the world of nature and that of human society.

The idealistic phase is a mixture of the previous two cultural mentalities. It represents a balance of needs and ends, conceiving reality as both material and spiritual, and seeking the satisfaction of both physical and spiritual needs.<sup>148</sup>

Sorokin and Bennabi developed and wrote their ideas at almost the same time, between 1930 and 1960. It is interesting that there are almost identical thoughts, concepts, and periodizations of the phases of the cyclical phenomenon of civilization. It is difficult to state who borrowed from whom.

In a simple comparison, we find that Bennabi's concept of spiritual, rational, and instinctive phases (Chapter Three) correspond to Sorokin's ideational, idealistic, and sensate phases. They both considered that the phases have different implications on culture and society, and reflect cultural mentalities, or psycho-mental states.

Bennabi viewed man (the human being) as the primary device of civilization; s/he originates change and controls his/her course. Civilization begins with the "integrated man" and declines with the "dissolved man." Sorokin had the same assumptions: humans create civilization and civilization is influenced in its rise and fall by the human factor.<sup>149</sup> Finally, both were anti determinist regarding the course of historical change.<sup>150</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Bennabi was dissatisfied with the two dominant paradigms of the philosophy of history and the social sciences, the three schools, and the different approaches to the study of civilization that are mainly a philosophical contemplation of historical data available to historians. Additionally, each school emphasizes different patterns in the historical change of civilization.

In various passages of his books he revised, evaluated and criticized different schools and thinkers' interpretations of the movement of civilization. He made it clear that none of those perspectives, approaches, and methods were adequate because they did not consider the multiplicity of the phenomenon of civilization, and they adhered to their philosophical perceptions and paradigms without investigating the social reality.

As illustrated in Chapter One, Bennabi viewed civilization as a multidimensional phenomenon, and as such it needs an adequate approach to study its various aspects as one set. So he proposed an approach that takes into consideration the whole, and incorporates sciences such as philosophy, history, sociology, and psychology.<sup>151</sup>

In Kuhn's idea of paradigm shift<sup>152</sup> or Kung's idea of paradigm change<sup>153</sup> there was a need, at least in the Muslim intellectual tradition, for a new approach to and a new paradigm in the study of civilization. In Kuhn's terms, there was a paradigm crisis in the study of civilization. Bennabi's formulation with its civilizational paradigm was an important new development and alternative to the traditionally fragmented and contradictory paradigms, schools, and approaches.

With its wide range of methodological sources, Bennabi's approach and paradigm may play a better role in studying civilization in general, and Muslim civilization in particular.

Bennabi's consideration of the two paradigms of philosophy of history and social sciences enabled him to avoid the dead end in his approach. In other words, he could avoid the conflict between the different views because he did not restrict himself to partial inclination, nor did he position himself in support or opposition of such approaches.



While he borrowed many concepts and terms from available sources, he re-proposed them in such a way that allowed him to be a system builder who dealt with various systems of thought without losing his own specific features.

Bennabi applied historians' methods in his historical examination of various events and transformations in history. He opened his analysis to the speculative as well as the critical philosophy of history so he could work with a horizon not necessary restricted to the inherited positivistic and empiricist understanding of knowledge. Moreover, his examination of the various sociological and social scientific schools and paradigms enabled him to sharpen his concepts and develop them in light of the modern achievements of the social sciences, especially their use of the qualitative and quantitative methods.

However, because of his knowledge of the Qur'an and the study of religions he was able to avoid materialist and secular conceptions of knowledge and historical change, although this was also related partially to his background (as seen in Chapter Four).

Bennabi also emphasized the need for an interdisciplinary approach which takes all disciplines into consideration. He was of the view that the study of civilization needs history, sociology, psychology, metaphysics and other sciences. Even mathematics and the physical sciences help the researcher to precisely define terms and concepts.

Consequently, at the intellectual and cognitive level, Bennabi developed his approach to civilization based on the previous approaches; it distinguishes itself by its integrative manner and implements borrowings from various disciplines in one set or system to tackle the complicated issue of civilization. The latter has three main dimensions: historical, social, and cultural.

Finally, using the internal-intellectual dimension of *Mu* helped me to discover how Bennabi was aware of the dominant paradigms in the study of civilization, and to see Bennabi's evaluation, examination and criticism of the various paradigms, schools of thought, and approaches as well as the concepts and terms within the field of civilization studies.

## The Roots of Bennabi's Approach to Civilization: The External-Intellectual Dimension

The fourth dimension of *Mu* in the metatheorizing approach adopted in this study includes the external-intellectual factors that involve an alternative to other academic disciplines for ideas, tools, concepts, and theories that can be used in the analysis of theory.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the external-intellectual dimension focuses on the influence of sciences and fields of research which are traditionally considered external or outsiders to the study of civilization.

Therefore, this chapter analyzes the impact of external factors (fields of research or sciences) on the formulation and development of Bennabi's approach to civilization. It looks for concepts, visions, terms, and methods borrowed from external intellectual activities that helped Bennabi to derive his own approach. More precisely, the focus in this chapter is on the cognitive and intellectual rather than the social aspects of those activities. In Bennabi's case, this external-intellectual dimension involves the impact of the Qur'an and Sunnah, the religious reformist thought in the Muslim world, psychology, the natural sciences, philosophy, and other intellectual activities external to the field of study of civilization and its two traditional dominant paradigms.

### THE IMPACT OF THE QUR'AN AND SUNNAH ON BENNABI'S APPROACH

The Qur'an and Sunnah are the primary sources of knowledge for any Muslim, and for Bennabi they form not only the religious and spiritual

background, but also an intellectual career. However, from a methodological point of view the reader should bear in mind that Bennabi was not a professional jurist or religious scholar in the traditional academic sense of the term within Muslim scientific traditions; rather, he was a Muslim thinker who considers Islam and its teachings his intellectual framework of thought and action.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, many researchers agree on Bennabi's adherence to Islamic principles.<sup>3</sup>

More specifically, they assert that Bennabi was a Muslim thinker who was deeply influenced by the Qur'an and Sunnah and the achievements of Muslim scientific traditions. Thus, the Qur'an, especially for him, was a source of vision and inspiration for new ideas, concepts and methodology.<sup>4</sup>

The following sections elaborate the formulation and development of Bennabi's approach. The analysis emphasizes aspects of the sources that influenced him, and the extent with which they helped him to formulate and develop his approach.

#### (1) The Important Aspects of the Qur'an and Sunnah for Bennabi

I see four points that may help us understand what aspects of the Qur'an and Sunnah were more influential in Bennabi's theorizing.

1. The first book Bennabi wrote in the 1930s was *Le phénomène coranique: Essai d'une théorie sur le Coran*.<sup>5</sup> In this book Bennabi produced a Qur'anic exegesis and interpretation using a new approach based on modern scientific discoveries and developments in sociology, archaeology, psychology, linguistics, and philosophy.

Any reader of this text finds that Bennabi established his ontological attitude and his epistemological as well as methodological foundations for his subsequent intellectual works that deal with various issues pertaining to human society and culture.<sup>6</sup>

2. In explaining the cyclical conception of historical change Bennabi refers to the Qur'an for two reasons: to explain the work of the religious idea in the civilizing process, and to examine the

credibility of the Qur'anic principle in history. For the latter, Bennabi claimed that in order to foster the importance of religious ideas in the changing human character we have to not only rely on the internal authenticity of Qur'anic principles, but examine their work and authenticity throughout history to find out how religion transforms the human personality and directs the civilizing process.<sup>7</sup>

3. Bennabi adopted one of the Qur'anic verses as his motto: "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change their inner selves."<sup>8</sup> It formed a framework for analyzing man's status and the dominance of the human factor in historical change and change in human conditions.<sup>9</sup> The matter that led him to consider socio-historical change is under the influence of the human factor.

In other words, Bennabi considers that the change in human conditions, at all levels, is a dependent variable related to the independent variable of man and his free will within patterns and laws that govern the human condition. Therefore, the change is not predetermined or unpreventable, but it is up to the human will if the human will is able to understand those patterns of change in their finality.

4. In his arguments for the importance of the social relationships network, and in addition to the various historical experiences, he referred to the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and deeds, in his efforts to establish Muslim society, Ummah, and civilization.<sup>10</sup>

He also referred to the Sunnah to establish some of his original ideas and conceptions. As a matter of fact, his concept of innate nature or natural disposition (*fitrah*) is a direct quotation from the hadith of the Prophet, mentioned in Chapter Three, which says: "Every child is born in *fitrah* (natural disposition) and his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian."<sup>11</sup>

The hadith emphasizes that man has been created by Allah in a state of *homonatura* (natural disposition or *fitrah*) which means that he is



fully "equipped" with all his inborn instincts. However, human conditions and social surroundings influence him deeply, and can drive him to flourish or into decline. This means that man, socially, is the outcome of socio-historical factors.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Bennabi maintained that in order to initiate a civilizing process, society has to change the status of the human from his natural state as a raw individual to become a conditioned individual.<sup>13</sup> This is because the former is the product of nature in a raw and elementary state, while the latter is formulated by society. The function of the religious ideal is to transform man's state from unconditioned to conditioned; it subjects man's instincts to a process of adaptation and conditioning through the mechanisms of orientation and refinement.<sup>14</sup>

The four points discussed above present examples of aspects in which Bennabi was influenced by the Qur'an and Sunnah in developing his approach to civilization.

## (2) How the Qur'an and Sunnah Influenced Bennabi

As a believer in Islamic principles, Bennabi was one of the leading thinkers who tried to search for all possible solutions to the dilemma of the Muslim world. Beside his early education in the *kuttab* which put him in touch with the Qur'an, he read to understand how it changed the Arabs' situation during the Prophet's time. The Sunnah was for him another source that helped him to understand and see how the Prophet worked systematically to establish a new society and to initiate a new civilizing process.

More to the point, in his quest to form his approach to civilization Bennabi referred to many studies of philosophers of history to find out the motivating force that enabled the very basic elements of civilization to be in dynamic interaction and to begin the civilizing process. On the other hand, he also applied various ideas those philosophers developed on certain civilizations.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, he reached his conclusion that the presence of the religious idea is the main motivator in all civilizations. In the analysis on the course of Muslim civilization he focused on Islam and its two sources, the Qur'an and Sunnah, to see how they formulated the catalyst or the motivator of the Muslim civilizing process.<sup>16</sup>

Bennabi argues that Muslim civilization began with the revelation of the word "read" which astonished the Prophet and raised the world for and against him. From that moment on, the Arab tribes entered world history and led the human civilization for more than ten centuries.<sup>17</sup> He turned to the Qur'an to discover how and why the holy book and the holy Prophet changed the situation of scattered tribes and established civilization.

In the Qur'an we find the primary text of bio-history instilled in the verse "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change their inner selves."<sup>18</sup> It provides the principle of how historical change occurs, i.e., any historical change in the conditions of a group, a nation, or a civilization is conditioned by a change in their inner core.<sup>19</sup>

Bennabi further clarified that when we read it we can "understand the secret behind the call of the Qur'an to Muslims to contemplate the history of past nations, so we may understand how the synthesis of man, soil, and time could happen."<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, Qur'anic principles provide a basis for understanding historical change and the role of religion in the process, while historical investigation helps to prove the Qur'anic principle and provides empirical proof.<sup>21</sup> Another factor that inspired Bennabi to read the Qur'an was his continuous argument against modernist thought or secular spirit of modernism which denied any active role of religion in human civilization.

As a Muslim thinker, Bennabi wanted to prove textually and historically that the Qur'an and the revelation (as stated in the teachings of all prophets) are an integral part of human civilization. The ideas the Qur'an established are general rules that govern the human mind and consciousness and form the system of existence, the guidance that Heaven provides for humanity to enlighten the path of history, and provide patterns for carrying out the responsibility of establishing human civilization on earth.<sup>22</sup>

Although Bennabi was educated in a college that prepared its students to be judges, he did not write a book on exegesis or Islamic theology or jurisprudence; rather, he emphasized his observation and contemplation of social reality. For him, the Qur'an is a source of insights, ideas, and methods.<sup>23</sup>

## (3) To What Extent Did the Qur'an and Sunnah Influence Bennabi?

In addition to considering the Qur'an and Sunnah as religious sources, Bennabi used them as sources of data, concepts, methods and proofs, as well as sources of understanding history and its dimensions.

The status of man, the importance of both the individual and the group, the laws of history, the transitory phenomenon of civilization, the importance of the religious idea and its role in the civilizing process, the cyclical movement, the pre-eminence of ideas, the pre-eminence of man in the civilizing process, and other Bennabi's key ideas all have their roots in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Bennabi didn't rely just on these sources, but the Qur'an touches on many points Bennabi wanted to emphasize, like the presence of patterns in history, the pre-eminence of the human factor, the non-predestined conception of change, the importance of the internal factor (human soul), and the role of society and social relations network in making the civilizing process not only possible but beneficial for both the individual and society.

Bennabi's cyclical view of the movement of civilization, even though it is a philosophical idea, also stems from its Qur'anic background. In *Islam in History and Society*, he prefaced the discussion of the cyclical phenomenon of civilization by a verse from the Qur'an which says: "And so are the days (good and not so good), We give to men by turns".<sup>24</sup> Bennabi adopted the idea of change or alternation (*tadāwul*) and termed it "the cyclical phenomenon." He prefaced chapter one where he discussed this concept with the cited Qur'anic verse<sup>25</sup> to undertake an analysis of the verse that led him to conclude that "the Qur'an includes the very basic patterns of historical phenomena."<sup>26</sup>

To resolve the problem of backwardness in the Muslim world we need to consider the permanent patterns of history that the Qur'an mentions, and that have been explained by Ibn Khaldūn.<sup>27</sup>

Bennabi was convinced that that verse and the influence the Qur'an had in shaping the culture of the Muslim world enabled Ibn Khaldūn to develop his notions of cycle and rise and fall in historical change, and to notice that patterns and laws in history are consistent and universal.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, Bennabi implemented concepts in the Qur'anic view of man as a creature born in a state of *fiṭrah* (natural disposition) and in

the Prophet's hadith on the status of man and the role of social environment against other concepts and terms derived from Marxist, Liberal, or Existentialist philosophies of his time.

Although he did not mention so many hadiths,<sup>29</sup> both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the Prophet's traditions, the civilizing process the Prophet initiated, and the very crucial experience of changing the Arab mindset and situation are present in Bennabi's theorization and formulation as he searched for a civilizational perspective to read Muslim history, especially in its early stages.

The Qur'anic undertones are very clearly agreed by those who study Bennabi. Although he did not borrow his terms directly from the Qur'an and Sunnah except in a few cases, the majority of his ideas, terms, and concepts owe their underlying structure and background to them.

It is the author's belief that the Qur'an and Sunnah, in the context of Mu, were a major external-intellectual factor that influenced the formulation and the development of Bennabi's approach to civilization. However, the Qur'an was also an internal-social factor that influenced his religious background and helped him to formulate his early ideas which shaped his personality and promoted as well as oriented his vision and understanding of both his status in society and his role as a Muslim. Consequently, he adopted the Qur'an and Sunnah as a source of vision, concepts, and framework for understanding, but the way he looked at them is a direct result of the reformist thought with its new paradigm in the Muslim world that paved the way for a new methodology in dealing with this text.

#### THE IMPACT OF REFORMIST THOUGHT IN THE MUSLIM WORLD ON BENNABI

In *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, the idea of *islāh* (reform) attracted him. Here is Bennabi's assumption about the reformist movement in the Muslim world:

We see among these and others the turbans of *islāh* that lead us to another method which is based on sound belief, adherence to the first



generation of Islam, and the changing of souls from the remains of the backwardness era ... the reformist movement the Algerian 'Ulama' led was attached to our souls and hearts because their approach was based on the verse "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."<sup>30</sup> It is sound thinking that to rebuild civilization, as a social phenomenon, should be done in the same circumstances and conditions that gave birth to its first cycle.<sup>31</sup>

Bennabi's reference to Algerian *islāh* does not mean that he did not get in touch with *islāh* in other parts of the Muslim world. His terminology of *islāh*, *tajdid*, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, al-Afghani, Abdu, Rida and other names were synonymous, and denote the very nature of the reformist movement in the Muslim world.

A short discussion of the reformist movement and its pioneers is in order to establish the intellectual connection between this school and Bennabi's thought.

#### (1) Reformist Thought: Its Pioneers and Ideas

Reformist thought in the Muslim world is known in Arabic as the thought of *islāh* and *tajdid*. Its school included many important names in the intellectual history and religious thought of the Muslim world over the last two centuries<sup>32</sup> such as Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1848-1902), Muhammad Abdu (1849-1905), Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938), Abd al-Hamid ibn Badis (1889-1940), and others. Although these reformists are from different places and eras, they formed a school of thought with a distinctive paradigm, ideas and approaches to the various issues pertaining to the Muslim world.

They all adopted the ideas of *islāh*, *tajdid*, and *nahḍah*, the hallmarks of that movement that mean reform, renewal, and renaissance respectively. They were the expression of a new paradigm that began to emerge in mid 18<sup>th</sup> century that jelled ideas in generations of Muslim youth.

The pioneers of reformist thought and movement spent their efforts to restructure Muslim society and civilization, to make a paradigmatic

change in mindsets, and to renew Muslims' perception of the true meaning of Islam and of the world so as to achieve a renaissance.

The protagonists of the movement, in order to legitimate their efforts, relied on a well known pattern that is a pivotal principle of Islam, *tajdid*, based on a very famous authentic tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. The hadith states: "Allah will raise for this community at the end of every hundred years one who will renovate its religion for it."<sup>33</sup>

Given that renewal is an internal pattern of religion and the Ummah of Islam, reformists used it as an epistemological and methodological basis for the promotion of their project, not just for legitimation, but to develop a new paradigm which might be called the paradigm of *tajdid* or Reform.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab initiated the idea of *islāh* in Arabia, and later in Asia and Africa. He called for a return to Islamic principles, to follow the footsteps of the Prophet, to purify Islamic beliefs from myths and folk ideas practiced by many Muslims, and to implement Islam as a religion, beliefs, rules of conduct, and a way of life.<sup>34</sup>

The main intellectual transformation that resulted from Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's movement was people's conception of the oneness of God, the original and fundamental view of Islam in which the idea of oneness is the axis of all other dynamic principles of Islam.<sup>35</sup> During the age of *taqlid* (imitation), which lasted from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of the oneness of God lost its motivating force because of the many myths and deviationist ideas attached to it.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's movement was very important in the context of reviving the original and fundamental worldview of Islam in which the idea of oneness is the axis of all other dynamic principles of Islam.<sup>37</sup>

Regardless of the criticism directed at the movement at the methodological and practical levels, at the epistemological level it has had an everlasting influence not only on its followers, but also on all Muslims. It played an important role in reforming the outlook of Islam in modern times because of its positioning on the issues of reason, revelation, *ijtihād*,<sup>38</sup> and the distinctiveness and dimensions of the principle of the oneness of God.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, the movement deserved what Iqbal described as "the first pulse of life in modern Islam. It was a source of inspiration, directly and indirectly, for most of the modern movements among the Muslims of Asia and Africa."<sup>40</sup>

The other mentor of reformist thought in the Muslim world was al-Afghani. Although he did not adopt the same approach as Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, he belonged to the same reformist paradigm which saw the return to the pure teachings of Islam and the heritage of the early generations of Islam as a prerequisite for any revival or reform to succeed. His main focus was political rather than intellectual reform. He called for a change in the Muslim situation based on the guidance the Qur'an provides. In his masterpieces *al-Urwah al-Wuthqa* al-Afghani states:

Allah's book (Qur'an) is among us, return to it and implement it in your acts and behavior ... It will give people their renaissance to gain back what has been taken from them. They will progress over others and preserve their rights. If the meanings of the Qur'an were discerned they would inspire and instill life into the souls of Muslims. So we would see its impact in this life and the glory in the hereafter granted by Allah.<sup>41</sup>

Al-Afghani believed that through Pan-Islamism as a political ideology Muslim people and countries could unite. He was behind many political movements and revolutions in Egypt, India, Iran, Turkey, and other parts of the Muslim world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>42</sup>

A contemporary of al-Afghani was al-Kawakibi who, in *Umm al-Qura* (Mother of the Village), presented an intellectual dialectic on the reasons for backwardness in the Muslim world. Also Rida, in *Tafsir al-Manar*, initiated a new methodology of Qur'an exegesis in order to find political, psychological, and social guidelines.

For his part, Abdu was a pioneer in debating with both Orientalists and traditionalists. With the latter he was involved in endless debates to reform religious education and to promote *ijtihad* and reform.<sup>43</sup>

All this was unprecedented in modern Muslim history. These ideas attracted Bennabi's attention and made him more critical of the inherited intellectual traditions of the post-*al-Muwahhid* era. "The reform

movement in the Muslim world since al-Afghani and his students like Abdu, Rida, Ibn Badis, and others has initiated a new way to refine Muslim culture by filtering out inherited illnesses and causes of decline."<sup>44</sup>

## (2) How Was Bennabi Influenced by the Ideas of the Reform Movement?

Bennabi adopted the fundamental ideas of that movement in its intellectual aspects rather than the jurisprudential ones, but there might be a question as to how he perceived its efforts and intellectual activities as well as its paradigm of *tajdid* and its ideas. For me the answer was twofold: first, I established links between Bennabi and the reformists (this was comprehensively discussed in Chapter Three), and second, I built on those connections more intellectually rather than socially to determine the boundaries of those ideas on Bennabi's philosophy.

The *Wahhābiyyah* movement embodied in the ideas of the 'Ulama' in Algeria during the colonial era, and Bennabi read books and journals published by those leading figures.

With his conception of religion as motivator and catalyst of civilizational values, Bennabi saw the *Wahhābiyyah* movement as "the only Islamic ideas which, thanks to its dynamism, were able to reform and modernize the stagnant Muslim world since the collapse of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad,"<sup>45</sup> a new system of thought that returns to the clarity and comprehensiveness of Islamic doctrines that revolve around the oneness of God.

If implemented with Qur'anic guidance, oneness produces a critical mind and free spirit that will never accept either malicious ideas or myth doctrines that have dominated the Muslim world in the last few centuries.<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, the reformist movement instilled in his mind a critical attitude towards religious and secular sectarian trends in the Muslim world. He saw that both tendencies and mindsets are in opposition to the universal spirit of the oneness of Allah that Islam has been calling for since its inception.



In Bennabi's view, nationalism, Atatürkism<sup>47</sup>, mysticism, sectarianism, and other similar "isms" are opposed to any civilizing process for two reasons: they were unable to provide an adequate outlook for changing the stagnant situation in the Muslim world, and to initiate the very preliminary conditions for interaction between the ingredients of civilization.<sup>48</sup>

Bennabi's admiration of the reformist movement and thought did not stop him from criticizing some of its ideas; they were involved in theoretical reform rather than opening the way for the Muslim mind to new ways of thinking.<sup>49</sup> He argued that although reformists' work brought a new dynamism to the Muslim world, it lacked practical rather than theoretical ideas,<sup>50</sup> it did not offer post-*al-Muwahhid* Muslims new methods to tackle practical matters.

Moreover, the proponents of the reform movement did not tackle the issue of backwardness from a comprehensive perspective, although they made a paradigmatic shift in understanding its vital crisis. They adopted the paradigm of *tajdid* which in its essence was able to renew our conceptions and perceptions of the situation, but they only looked partially at the problems of the Muslim world.<sup>51</sup>

As a politician, al-Afghani emphasized a political solution, while Abdu, a religious scholar, stressed a reform of theology through religious education. Others suggested different diagnoses that did not address the illness, and spent more time treating the symptoms with palliatives.

Consequently, even though they adopted a comprehensive paradigm for the reform of Muslim civilization,<sup>52</sup> reformist efforts were unsystematic and partial.

For instance, they did not emphasize the human factor as much as was necessary in spite of their adopted Qur'anic verse motto that emphasized the import of the human factor and of internal change. Neither did reformers pay much attention to psychological factors that are pivotal in understanding the patterns that change the human personality towards an active role.<sup>53</sup>

Criticizing this attitude, Bennabi saw that it was not a question of convincing believing Muslims about Islam, but how to make them live and feel their existence as Muslims who must be active in life.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, psychology is vital in developing a new science that provides an internal momentum for the masses trying to overcoming their own inertia.<sup>55</sup>

Bennabi was the product of the reformist movement in terms of perspectives, ideas, and concepts of reformists of the Muslim world in the last two centuries.<sup>56</sup> This does not mean that he was a mere imitator of its proponents but an admirer and critic of their failure to elaborate a methodology that addressed the various issues of the Muslim world in a systematic way.

Bennabi saw the need to enrich his approach with other sources so he turned to psychology to look for terms, concepts and insight.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGY ON BENNABI'S APPROACH TO CIVILIZATION

Bennabi was greatly concerned with motivating Muslims out of inertia so they could have an active role in history and contribute to the civilizing process. Although, he appreciated the reformists' efforts, he did not find in their new paradigm a well-developed theory on how to deal with the psychological aspects of the human factor in civilization. Therefore, he turned to psychology for a systematic approach.

Now I want to posit two questions I feel are of great methodological importance: how did Bennabi get in touch with psychology, and what are the main ideas that influenced him in every school?

##### (1) How Did Bennabi Get in Touch With Psychology?

There are many factors that led Bennabi to read psychological works of leading psychologists of his time.

His focus on the human factor and his concern over internal aspects of human personality led him to look for tools and means to understand how the human personality could be changed and developed in line with the objective of achieving the civilizing process. His intellectual and social relations during his stay in France and Egypt stimulated his curiosity to read about the new postulates in modern science, including the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), and the developmental psychology of Jean Piaget (1896-1980).

The author's analytical study of Bennabi's autobiography and other texts clearly shows these factors:<sup>57</sup> he claimed that undoubtedly, psychology was one of his main sources for the study of civilization.<sup>58</sup>

The advancement of civilization led him to focus on psycho-sociological aspects and psychological theories to understand the mechanisms of psycho-social transformation of the human condition in the civilizing process.

Religion is another factor and characteristic of human life, from the most primitive stages of social organization to the most advanced stages of its civilization. It has been such that from "the simple dolmen to the most imposing temple, architecture has evolved in tandem with religious thought."<sup>59</sup>

While in his treatise this statement may be historically true, as a civilizationist, he needed to understand how religious ideas enter into the synthesis of social values, and how they elevate the human vision beyond earthly life in order to link him to metaphysical ambitions.<sup>60</sup>

Consequently, he found himself supported by the broad agreement of theologians, philosophers, social scientists and moralists about the existence of religion in human life and civilization, and at the same time faced by a great controversy and dispute on the origins of religion, its nature, and its role in human life.<sup>61</sup> Bennabi faced the double task of understanding how religion works in changing the human psyche and forging the link between the psychological role of religion as a social catalyst and its spiritual role of guidance on earthly activities with his heavenly ambitions.

The author found that among the psychologists Bennabi endorsed in his writings Freud's and Jung's ideas were the most prevalent in regard to the position and function of religion, although he was at odds with their theoretical framework, as we will see.

Yet another factor for choosing psychology was to understand the conditions of transforming the human from an "individual" to a "person."<sup>62</sup> Concepts like adaptation, archetypes, integration, repression, the process of conditioning, and discussions on the motivating forces and the role of religion and their psychological connotations are all incorporated in Bennabi's work.<sup>63</sup> He looked for tools to understand and explain the socio-cultural development of society and found

them in Piaget's developmental psychology, as mentioned in *The Problems of Ideas in the Muslim World*.

Piaget's contribution to developmental psychology influenced Bennabi's typology of the psycho-sociological development of society throughout its three ages: the age of things, of persons, and the age of ideas.<sup>64</sup>

Lastly, there is a broad agreement among Bennabi scholars that psychology was an important field from which Bennabi derived and borrowed some of his terms and concepts while he studied modern sciences in France.<sup>65</sup>

At this point, the author proposes to discuss the main ideas in psychology that influenced Bennabi and to what extent they influenced his approach.

## (2) The Main Ideas in Psychology that Influenced Bennabi's Approach

In this section the author adopts a partial comparative approach to examine Bennabi's borrowings from psychologists against his originality, but I prefer to discuss them with each of the three main figures of psychology.

### (a) Freud's Influence on Bennabi's Approach

In *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, Bennabi emphasized his need for psychoanalysis in order to study the process of adaptation and conditioning of the human factor to transfer him from homonatura to the "conditioned man."<sup>66</sup> From Freud he borrowed terms such as repression, instinct, and the religious factor, and other Freudian ideas related to the study of civilization.

In fact, Freud expressed his views on civilization in two of his works: *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1929-1930). Influenced by the 19<sup>th</sup> century zeal for evolution, and Tylor's concept of culture and civilization from the ethnographic perspective,<sup>67</sup> Freud conceptualized civilization in evolutionary anthropological terms used to form his psychological theory of psychoanalysis.



Mankind's higher mental activities, according to Freud, are religious systems, philosophy, and the ideal perfection of individuals or people based on higher ideas. Furthermore, he argued that the development of civilization necessitates the imposition of restrictions on individuals.<sup>68</sup>

In other words, civilization becomes possible when individuals are forced by society to "renounce" their instinctive desires and wild behavior. As a result, civilization imposes great sacrifices not only on man's sexuality but also on his aggressiveness.<sup>69</sup>

In Freud's view, "repression" of desires is a necessary mechanism to accomplish the objective of civilization, i.e., every civilization must be built upon coercion and renounce its instincts.<sup>70</sup> Freud presumes that men are not gentle and friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked. On the contrary, a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment, thus the tendency of aggression is the factor that disturbs our relations with our neighbors and makes it necessary for culture (civilization) to institute its high demands.

Civilized society is perpetually menaced with disintegration through this primary hostility of men towards one another that endanger the mission of civilization. Therefore, civilization expects to prevent the worst atrocities of brutal violence by taking upon itself the right to employ violence against human aggressions.<sup>71</sup>

Freud acknowledges that the super-ego in the religious sense is looked upon as an expression of God's will and nothing else. He sees that religion plays the role of provider of the superego which controls the ego and its desires from being uncontrolled and uncensored. He also insists on the role of religion in providing harmony and consolation,<sup>72</sup> but maintains his conception of "religion as an illusion."

Even though the author sees that Freud's conception of and attitude towards religion are both limited and scientifically and culturally embedded,<sup>73</sup> Bennabi insisted that psychoanalysis brought us to the interface of man's religious life, religious experience or religious ideas that work in changing the inner man; that psychoanalysis is an important tool for a greater and deeper understanding of the religious phenomenon and its role in directing the vital powers and faculties of human personality in the civilizing process.<sup>74</sup>

Bennabi saw that when we want to analyze epistemologically the process of adaptation and conditioning of the human factor in the civilizing process, we need to refer to Freud's psychoanalytical terms such as "instinct" and "repression."

This is because man's starting point of civilization is the homonatura or what he calls the human in his innate nature. However, the religious idea will take over the role of conditioning his instincts and adapting them. The latter is known in Freudian psychology as "oppression."<sup>75</sup>

For Bennabi religion represses instincts, but in a different sense from that which Freud conceptualized it: "in this case, the individual, becomes partially free of the law of nature (instincts) instilled in his body. At same time, he becomes, fully, under the necessities of the spirit which the religious idea has instilled in his soul."<sup>76</sup>

The religious idea frees the human soul from the law of instincts and subordinates it to the law of the spirit, especially in the first stage of the civilizing process.

Influenced by the Qur'an and Islamic culture, Bennabi sees that instincts are part of the human personality, and as such they are not so diabolic in nature as to be forsaken. From their natural state they need to adapt to a more dynamic state in the process of fulfilling a civilizing mission.<sup>77</sup>

Similarities between Bennabi's understanding of the role of the religious idea and Freud's conception of the role of religion in the process of civilization include the term "repression of instincts" for the sake of the superego in Freud's case, and for the sake of the spirit in Bennabi's case. They differed in their interpretation of the degree of repression and its orientation. While Freud's repression denotes total coercion and renunciation of instincts, Bennabi's concept suggests that innate instincts give priority to the ambitions of the spirit in the civilizing process.<sup>78</sup>

Although Bennabi has his own concept of religion and its role in society, the divine aspect of religion provides the motives to restrict people by its teachings. This idea was in both Freud's and Bennabi's thought.

Although Freud maintains his concept of "religion as an illusion," he acknowledges the role of religion in providing harmony and consolation.<sup>79</sup> In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud stresses the importance of religion:

The doctrines of religion are not a subject one can quibble about like any other. Our civilization is built up on them, and the maintenance of human society is based on the majority of man's believing in the truth of those doctrines. If men are taught that there is no almighty and all-just God, no divine order and no future life, they will feel exempt from all obligations to obey the precepts of civilization. Everyone will, without inhibition or fear, follow his asocial, egoistic instincts and seek to exercise his power; chaos, which we have banished through many thousands of years of the work of civilization, will come again.<sup>80</sup>

At any given epoch of civilization the superego originates in both the individual and collective levels; it is based on the impression left by great leading personalities, men of outstanding force of mind, or men in whom some human tendency has developed in unusual strength and purity. Although those personalities belong to "the realm of mythology," they are important for the "cultural superego to set up high ideals and standards," and the failure to fulfil them is punished by "anxiety of conscience."<sup>81</sup>

Those high ideals and standards are subsumed under the term "ethics." The latter for Freud, must be regarded as a therapeutic effort, as an endeavor to achieve something through the standards imposed by the super-ego.<sup>82</sup> However, for Bennabi, the role of religion, or the religious idea is important in generating a civilizing process in any given human society.<sup>83</sup>

Religion, for Bennabi is not an illusion but part of the cosmic order. Moreover, the importance of religion is not only related to its essence and divine source, but essentially to its social role as a catalyst of human values. It makes the soul surpass its ordinary constraints to achieve a high level of efficiency and brightness.<sup>84</sup>

It directs the individual's behavior toward his/her vital powers and enables society to undertake common activity. It plays the role of

synthesizer of the ingredients of civilization by providing the moral factor which Freud called ethics or superego.<sup>85</sup>

At this point of the discussion, the author sustains that the most important influence of Freud on Bennabi is the insights and tools which psychoanalysis put forward to understand the psycho-temporal role of religion in changing the inner side of human personality, and in directing the vital powers of individuals and groups towards a positive role in the civilizing process.

Although he used Freudian theories, he felt free from philosophical extensions as long as he was able to incorporate them into his own system in a different way. To overcome the shortcomings of Freudian notions Bennabi turned to Jung.

#### (b) Jung's Influence on Bennabi's Approach

Bennabi referred to Jung many times and adopted some of his concepts in different ways.<sup>86</sup> One of the most important terms borrowed from Jung for Bennabi's study on the realm of ideas is "archetypes" which means forms or ideas that indicate the "primordial images" engraved in the collective consciousness of humankind in order to prove the presence of religion in the human personality.<sup>87</sup> He sees that the term denotes the fundamental ideas of society that form "an original cultural plasma which will determine all its characteristic features vis-à-vis other cultures and civilizations."<sup>88</sup>

Both scholars share the same concept but different content and roots for the term. While Jung's archetypes contain the whole spiritual experience of humankind which constitutes the collective consciousness,<sup>89</sup> Bennabi's concept of archetypes is rooted in religion, whether revealed or any human-made religious ideal, both of which provide a society with an outlook and framework for its existence.<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore, he gave it his own connotation. He considers that society at the post-civilized stage loses its creative contact with its archetypes, which are "the master ideas" that each generation inherits from the preceding generation and passes on to the next: "master ideas that support society's activity are contained in its ethics, whereas practical ideas which guide the activity are embodied by its techniques." Both types of master ideas have their origins, whether sacred or secular,



in the cultural universe of society.<sup>91</sup> The archetypes also include some practical ideas that every generation submits to more or less modification, so as to face the specific circumstances of its historical moment.<sup>92</sup>

When the religious idea that directs the civilizing process loses its dynamic role, society's civilizing process begins to degenerate and ceases to work in unison with its idea or archetypes. The breakdown of civilization begins when:

the rupture with the archetypes reaches its extreme, as the matrix of our impressed ideas (archetypes) are almost wiped out in our subjectivity, and as our expressed ideas molded according to that matrix become shapeless, incoherent, and valueless.<sup>93</sup>

Bennabi borrowed and incorporated in his system other Jungian terms and concepts like "extroverted" and "introverted" to analyze the gradual integration of people, from childhood into society (their degree of socialization). Bennabi recounts that he used those two terms to teach some illiterate Algerian workers for nine months in 1938, in France. The result was interesting: he was able to change the ideas, lifestyle, and even appearance of those workers.<sup>94</sup>

He also implemented those two terms at the social level (collective), according to his notion of orientation, to deal with various types of groups in society, such as the rural and urban types.<sup>95</sup>

What is important in the comparison between both theorists is that they rejected the positivistic concept of human consciousness, and both understood the religious role in the civilizing process. Both emphasized this role that provides the archetypes for society to further its mission in history, and for the individual to live and act according to the collective consciousness.

At this point of the discussion on Jung's impact on Bennabi's theorization, the author does not wish to pursue Bennabi's refusal to accept the underlying structure of some of the views on religion because of their materialistic and positivistic framework. Bennabi does not seem satisfied with the contributions of Freud and Jung because they do not help him to study the psychosocial development of people in the civilizing process. Hence, he borrows other tools of analysis from Piaget.

### *(c) Piaget's Influence on Bennabi's Approach*

Although Bennabi derived the concept of stages mainly from Ibn Khāldūn (see Chapter Three), and although both of them stressed the similarity between the growth of individuals and society,<sup>96</sup> Bennabi went further to apply modern developmental psychology to analyse the psychosocial progress of society.

In *The Problems of Ideas in the Muslim World*, Bennabi acknowledged that he was applying what developmental psychologists had formulated in their study of the mental and cognitive development of individuals. Through content analysis, this is Piaget's theory of cognitive development. However Bennabi focused more on the implications of each stage in the process of integration of the individual into society.<sup>97</sup>

After examining Bennabi's concept of the three ages of society, the author finds that he was influenced by the idea of universal stages put forth by Piaget in his study of the mental growth of humans.<sup>98</sup> He tried to establish universal stages through which a society passes in its historical course. Moreover, he stressed that from a historical point of view both the individual and society seem to go through the same three stages: 1) the age of the object, 2) the age of the person, and 3) the age of the idea.<sup>99</sup>

Being aware of the difference between the individual and the group (society) Bennabi asserts that in society the passage from one age to another is not as obvious as in the individual's case.<sup>100</sup>

However, the psychological approach would enable the observer to grasp the qualitative changes occurring in society which are manifested in the society's social relations network.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, techniques developed by developmental psychologists could be applied to the psychosocial development of society.<sup>102</sup>

There are also big similarities between Piaget's characteristics of the sensory motor stage, the preoperational stage, and the formal stage and Bennabi's concept of the age of objects, persons, and ideas.

Piaget's first stage denotes that the child's relationship with the external world is sensory and mechanistic,<sup>103</sup> while Bennabi's first age denotes that society formulates its judgments and decisions according to criteria imposed by the realm of objects, which implies that society is

still in the childhood stage. Thus, the nature and quality of judgments are subject to the primitive needs of man and basically relate to the world of his senses, and lie more on the tangible reality which grounds him in the realm of objects (things).<sup>104</sup> The mentality of the senses governs society. Using Bennabi's term, the thingness mentality, "choseisme," dominates individual and society in all aspects of life.

Piaget's preoperational stage denotes that the child is still unable to think logically, therefore he relies more on his parents and he tries to imitate them.<sup>105</sup> This corresponds to Bennabi's second age (age of things or objects) in which society forms its judgments following the standards of a human model, and people in this age depend on the human model which in turn provides them an authority figure to be followed or imitated.<sup>106</sup>

Bennabi called it the age of "personification" where heroic and nefarious personalities dominate the life of society.<sup>107</sup>

The last two of Piaget's stages of concrete operations and formal operations denote that the child or the individual is mature enough to think independently and to abstract and produce reasonable thinking.<sup>108</sup> For Bennabi, Piaget's last two stages correspond to the age of ideas. Here, society reaches its maturity, the ideal becomes more abstract, and ideas become self-grounded and play a leading role in the orientation of society's vocation.<sup>109</sup>

In other words, Bennabi's looked for help in Piaget's theory concerning the process and the mechanisms that transform man from his state of homonatura into the state of a person where he lives following a certain ideal.<sup>110</sup>

He approached this process of adaptation from a psychological point of view using Piaget's developmental psychology which was mainly for the mental development of the individual to the psychosocial development of society.<sup>111</sup> This approach to the study of human collective psycho-sociological conditions was unprecedented among civilizationists.

It affected his theorization in a way that led him not to rely only on external observations and historical categorization of the stages, but also to specify the psychosocial age of society in order to understand in fundamental and profound ways the cultural realm of societies, and to

gain a deep understanding of the mechanisms of such a society in the various stages of its historical process.

Piaget's influence on Bennabi's theorization does not ignore the fact that he had his own criticisms of Piaget's theoretical concepts and ideas, and their metaphysical and philosophical connotations and underlying structures.

The impact of psychology on Bennabi's theorizing was the hallmark of his approach to civilization. Throughout his analyses, he implemented the latest developments of research like psychoanalysis, analytical psychology, and developmental psychology because it can assist in providing a deep understanding of the mechanisms that change human personality according to the sublime archetypes put forward by the religious ideal.<sup>112</sup> Therefore Bennabi made psychology one of the four sciences peculiar to the study of the civilizational phenomenon, together with sociology, history, and metaphysics.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF PHILOSOPHY ON BENNABI'S APPROACH

The fourth external intellectual factor which influenced Bennabi's approach to civilization was philosophy. He was introduced to the field by his friend Benssai in Paris during his studies at the Polytechnic.<sup>113</sup> Benssai was doing his PhD in philosophy on al-Ghazālī<sup>114</sup> at the Sorbonne at the time, and his professionalism in Islamic studies, his Sorbonne links, and his vast knowledge of philosophy helped Bennabi to become acquainted with many philosophical ideas<sup>115</sup> of his time and before his time.<sup>116</sup> Bennabi's links with philosophy, Cartesian thought, and the discourse of modernity form an external source for his approach to civilization.

#### (1) Bennabi's Links with Some Philosophers

##### *(a) Philosophers and Philosophies of Less Importance*

From the methodological point of view, Bennabi has two attitudes towards various philosophies and philosophers: those of less importance, and those of more importance.



He mentioned many philosophical ideas and philosophers that validate and give authority to his analysis. Accordingly, this section contains many names given as reference for ideas, terms, or historical events, as well as personalities that have an impact on Bennabi's scientific reasoning.

In his analysis of the realm of ideas and "the answers to the cosmic vacuum" Bennabi referred to two novels that exemplify the way two different civilizations look to the world: *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān* by Ibn Tufayl (d. 581 AH / 1185 CE) Andalusian novelist and philosopher, presents the view of Muslim civilization, while *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) presents Western civilization viewpoint.<sup>117</sup>

Another example is Ibn Rushd (520–595 AH / 1126–1198 CE) and al-Ghazālī. For Bennabi, both form a model for the intellectual dialogue which has to be established in the Muslim world.<sup>118</sup>

Bennabi illustrated the "mechanism of conditioned reflexes" in the way al-Ghazālī overcame his spiritual crisis; it is an example of how we can mold conditioned reflexes by means of the educational process.<sup>119</sup>

In Bennabi's analysis, John Locke (1632–1704) and the French Encyclopaedists<sup>120</sup> were usually referred to as providers of the scientific secular framework for European and Western culture.<sup>121</sup>

In addition, in his analysis of the ideal type of society and the model for society in its civilized stage, and his concept and role of the social relations network, Bennabi rejected Plato's *Republic* and al-Fārābī's (257–338 AH / 870–950 CE) *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* (On the Principles of the Views of the Inhabitants of the Excellent State, also titled, The Ideal City) because the model of the Islamic city is Madīnah itself at the time of 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb (d. 23 AH / 644 CE).

To mention all the philosophers Bennabi refers to in his books is beyond the scope of this study. However, the most important philosophers and philosophical ideas will be addressed in the following section.

#### (b) *Philosophers of More Importance*

The author will discuss two points on the basis of the external-intellectual dimension of *Mu*: Rene Descartes (1596–1650) and Cartesian thought, and the discourse of modernity.

Even though there were other important philosophers who influenced Bennabi like Ibn Khaldūn, Hegel, Marx, and Comte who have been discussed in the context of other (*Mu*) dimensions, the author justifies choosing Descartes from among all the other philosophers because his impact on Bennabi was not given enough analysis.

All philosophical contributions and influences on Bennabi will be addressed in the context of the discourse of Modernity. The sum of all philosophies in the Western world since the Renaissance, altogether, contributed in shaping, orienting, and formulating its discourse.

#### (2) The Impact of Descartes on Bennabi's Approach

The impact of Descartes and Cartesian thought could be divided into the Cartesian Spirit and the analytical method of analysis.

##### (a) *The Influence of the Cartesian Spirit*

In his evaluation of the reform efforts in the Muslim world, at the universal level, Bennabi tried to compare them with the modern European reform efforts such as that of Luther and Calvin. For him, those efforts were a waste of time and energy. Thus, if we want to evaluate them we have to compare them with the products of Luther and Calvin during the European reformation era and with that of Descartes who paved the way in Europe for technological development.<sup>122</sup>

For Bennabi, Descartes was a pioneer in his way of thinking. He recognized a new spirit that took two centuries to be fully established in Europe.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, in Descartes' *Discourse on Method* Bennabi saw a new way of thinking and a new methodology that had an everlasting impact on Western civilization. In *Qaḍāyā Kubrā* (Grand Themes),<sup>124</sup> Bennabi cites Descartes:

It is possible to reach knowledge that will be very useful in this life, and that instead of the speculative philosophy now taught in schools we can find a practical one by which knowing the nature and behavior of fire, water, air, stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies which surround us, as well as understand the different skills of our workers, we can employ these entities for all the purposes for which they are suited, and so make ourselves masters and owners of nature.<sup>125</sup>

Bennabi stressed that those brilliant ideas were pregnant with what would happen after Descartes' time in terms of the scientific and technological transformation that led the West to its modern civilization. In other words, "it was the method of Descartes that generally formed the new mental and intellectual environment in which the pragmatic mentality that characterizes the modern Western civilization has grown up."<sup>126</sup> Bennabi was looking for a pattern in the relationship between the intellectual mental environment of such a society and the orientation that follows. Furthermore he also benefited from Descartes' analytical philosophy through his use of the two mechanisms of analysis and synthesis.

The spirit of Descartes' methodology was the point that made him a pioneer critical thinker. Many philosophers came up with results that differed in varying respects from his, but they proceeded in the spirit of Descartes. They were motivated by a desire to determine what can be known about reality and a readiness to reject traditional beliefs if the results of inquiry showed that traditional beliefs could not be justified.<sup>127</sup>

It was that spirit that attracted Bennabi's attention. Therefore, he asserts that Descartes positively oriented and outlined the objective way for Western culture. The latter was based on the empirical method, which was in fact the direct cause of the development of modern Western civilization in its material aspect.<sup>128</sup>

The "method was a central concern of Descartes" and has some very important and interesting properties. First, it results in knowledge that is completely certain. Second, the method imposes a certain structure on knowledge.<sup>129</sup>

#### *(b) The Influence of the Analytical Method*

One of Bennabi's most important borrowings from Descartes was his analytical method. Bennabi applied two different, yet closely inter-related analytical mechanisms in order to study the structural elements of civilization and the function of those elements in the civilizing process. The first is the analysis mechanism consisting of the dissection of the phenomena at issue into their basic constituents with a view to discovering their structures. The second is the synthesis mechanism

that looks at the phenomena under consideration in the course of their action to grasp their dynamics.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, Descartes' influence on the intellectual history of Western civilization remains in the double role he pursued in re-establishing the modern Western culture: on the one hand, he led a critical review of the Middle Ages' culture so he initiated a new way of thinking towards the European heritage by the Europeans themselves, which resulted in their abundance of dead and deadly ideas inherited from their history.

On the other hand, Descartes established a rational way of thinking that led Western thought to be more critical of itself and to borrowing ideas, and to be more objective and avoid mythology and non practical ideas. Thus, he paved the way for empirical methodology which in turn was the direct factor in the development of modern civilization in its material aspect.<sup>131</sup>

#### *(3) The Impact of the Discourse of Modernity*

To talk about the influence of Modernity on Bennabi's theorization is to talk about the atmosphere and milieu in which Bennabi lived and grew up, especially during his mature years while he was a university student, and later as an activist and writer.

There is a methodological point regarding the discourse of Modernity which focuses more on its general characteristics regardless of the individual thinkers' contributions, and aims to reveal the general frame of thought in the West in order to put Bennabi's theorization into its intellectual context.

Bennabi dealt with various paradigms, schools of thought, and approaches with openness, and although he borrowed many concepts, terms, and techniques from various fields of research, he was very critical of the Western secular outlook underlying them.<sup>132</sup>

Those various approaches rely exclusively on rationalism, empiricism, and reductionism. Thus, their vision of the human personality and human conditions excludes the spiritual dimension and tends to materialize and externalize all aspects of the human personality.<sup>133</sup>



With a base in his religious background and the impact of the Qur'an upon his theorization, Bennabi made an epistemological distinction between the borrowings he incorporated in his approach and their theoretical framework that was exemplified in the Western modernist worldview.

On many occasions he exhibited a conscious examination of the various fields of research, and viewed modern social and human sciences as a product of Western cultural and scientific traditions. Hence, they form an integrated whole of Western Modernity which is mainly materialist, secular, and scientific.

The Modernist outlook produced sciences which, in their fundamental paradigms, approaches, methodologies, and views of man and human conditions, are invariably materialist and secular. He introduced *The Qur'anic Phenomenon* with a chapter that discussed "some philosophical and methodological considerations" in order to establish his own concepts of the study of religion, as opposed to the general method of argument of the modernists.<sup>134</sup>

As part of the overall product of Modernity, Western viewpoints are predominantly secular, and characterized by atheism, agnosticism, and humanism. In line with this outlook, the dominant trend in Western intellectualism is similarly materialistic and secular.

In modern sociology, psychology, philosophy, and thought in general human conditions have been approached and studied from the materialist point of view. As a result, the spiritual or religious dimension of the human personality was either less recognized or denied or given only minor importance.

For Bennabi, modern philosophy and the social and human sciences in their modernist vein have abided by reductionism. Excited by the development in the natural sciences, social scientists and philosophers applied the methodology of the natural sciences to study the human and social phenomena. Accordingly, the objective of achieving the precision and simplicity of the natural sciences led them to adopt the empirical approach to study social phenomena. Hence, Comte's "social physics" led to "positive" social and human sciences that established their views in a positivistic framework.

Positivism became the dominant methodology in all the social and human sciences, including psychology. Experience alone is proclaimed to be the origin of all our knowledge, and all non-empirical elements must be purged.

Epistemologically speaking, the basis of modern science has become more and more reductionist. Reductionism has been the hallmark of most modern paradigms and approaches, which can be seen in two aspects of modern knowledge. The first is avoidance of external sources of knowledge, or avoidance of revealed knowledge as a source of concepts, terms, meanings, methodologies, and facts, starting from the historical conflict between church and scientists, and generalized on all religious experiences without a rational basis. The second aspect is the reduction of the human and social phenomena to one dimension. Bounded by the empiricist conception of "scientific methodology," modern social and human sciences established their methodology that sees man and human conditions reduced to the level of matter or the body. The positivistic paradigm launched by Comte, Saint Simone, and others, led to the quantification of every phenomenon, and to apply techniques of observation and experiment.

In this methodology, religion and spiritual reality are void, meaningless, and mythological. It is to be acknowledged only as human-made myth or idealization to provide explanations for the unexplained phenomena.<sup>135</sup>

The discussion does not mean the rejection of useful and relative valid empirical study of phenomena or highly developed techniques of the modern sciences and the benefits of the quantification paradigm. However, to rely only on that led to reductionism and avoidance of religion, one of the important sources of knowledge. The material secular standpoint of modern knowledge, epistemologically, lacks a comprehensive vision of human personality and human conditions.<sup>136</sup>

Its vision has been limited and confined to narrow earthly objectives while religion, in light of the Qur'an, was revealed to man to provide motivation for his civilizing faculties, to link between man's heavenly ambition to gain Allah's blessings and mercy, and the necessities of earth, and to elevate his ambitions beyond earthly life.<sup>137</sup>

The discourse of modernity enabled Bennabi, the thinker who adhered to Islamic principles, to understand the philosophical and methodological framework and the historical development of various sciences and theories.<sup>138</sup> Although he benefited from various sciences, he saw the need for a methodology aware of all interrelated aspects of the human personality.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES ON BENNABI'S APPROACH

As an engineer Bennabi was highly influenced by mathematics, physics, and the natural sciences in his terminology, his search for precision, his way of analysis, his conscious distinction between natural and socio-historical phenomena, and the way he presented his ideas. Therefore, in the analysis of theoretical or practical issues he uses algebraic formulae and mathematical equations as well as notions that were derived from physics or chemistry.

As Bariun assures, Bennabi's scientific training as an engineer implanted in him a concern to define his concepts, generally through analysis and synthesis<sup>139</sup> that showed his concern for presenting structural elements and functional roles of the process of the formation of civilization. In his critical evaluation of the Muslim religious movement in its course toward reform he used terms borrowed from physics:

The religious movement for Muslim renaissance was, using a physics term, a "centripetal movement." To achieve a new civilizing process it was looking for a religious firebrand necessary for a homogeneous historical dynamic synthesis which has been provided by Islam.<sup>140</sup>

The restructuring movement in the Muslim world took Islam as its center of reference and source of insight. Throughout its course it worked to activate Muslim consciousness and make it aware of the centrality of Islam in the civilizing process. On another occasion, he used the term "entropy" from thermodynamics and the term "polarization" from physics to express polarization or schism in Muslim

thought and life because of a pseudo development that was rich in techniques and materials but poor in ideas.<sup>141</sup>

The Muslim consciousness is disrupted because of contradictions. The Muslim does not know how to incorporate himself in a world he is obliged to live in; hence he is not able to cope with it. That situation happened because of the entropic development which increases materials more than brings new ideas ... Consequently, Muslim thought is in a state of double polarization which divided its psyche into two separate worlds: the Muslim lives in a world strange to him in which he owns its things but not its ideas.<sup>142</sup>

The influence of science on Bennabi's thinking can be categorized into four fundamental aspects of his thought and approach. First, unlike other thinkers of his time he used unprecedented language of mathematics, physics, and the natural sciences void of rhetorical and literary formulations. It is a language that uses more theoretical, philosophical, and mathematical expressions which tend to go directly to the point. His style distinguishes him from any other literature of his time.<sup>143</sup>

The second aspect is his consciousness of the stages through which the natural sciences have passed towards more precision and scientificity. His training in the natural sciences helped him to find two of their important features. On the one hand, he saw the theoretical underpinnings of modern sciences which orients science, directs its objectives, and designs its fate towards the so-called objective knowledge that is based mainly on the quantification notion. On the other hand, he was made aware of the sublime objective of modern science which is the adherence to general laws of natural phenomena.

For the first feature, Bennabi was very critical of the positivist and rationalist framework of modern science that led to ideological conceptions which are not necessarily based on scientific investigation. In this respect, the materialist view of the natural world and the transformation of materialist understanding of the phenomena into an ideology or a new religion was one aspect of the modernist discourse that Bennabi criticized, as will be discussed in the next section.



For the second feature Bennabi was an advocate. Probably influenced by the Qur'an's insistence on the presence of laws and patterns for every creature, event, and action which together belong to Allah the creator of those laws and patterns, Bennabi supported the achievements of modern science in its efforts to discover the laws of natural phenomena, so that it may be employed for the benefit of human prosperity. Therefore, he argued that the discovery of natural phenomena encourages scholars of social phenomena to work along the same path to discover patterns and laws that govern it.<sup>144</sup>

In this context, all intellectual efforts and Bennabi's theorization on civilization establish intellectual and scientific traditions among the Muslim elite to look into issues of development and backwardness in the Muslim world with an analytical eye that reveals the underlying law: to find Allah's patterns in those phenomena.<sup>145</sup>

The third aspect of the natural sciences' influence on Bennabi may be found in his awareness of the complexity of social phenomena in terms of the time-space factors and the human factor at its individual, psychological, social, spiritual, material, and mental levels.

Bennabi was an advocate of the natural science methodology, but at the same time he was conscious of the error of implementing it on social phenomena; natural phenomena are predetermined, they lack the free will which enables them to change their destiny while social phenomena, because of the human factor, are difficult to determine.

Moreover, since the human factor is multi-dimensional social scientists have to take into consideration every dimension and aspect, but they have yet to develop a comprehensive approach and acceptable generalizations that are fully consistent with those of the natural sciences.<sup>146</sup>

Therefore, from the very beginning of his intellectual efforts Bennabi called for a new approach that would take into consideration all dimensions and aspects of civilization. This is precisely why the author calls it the interdisciplinary approach to civilization: it incorporates the systematic use of various concepts, terms, methods and techniques from a range of sciences in an integrative manner that gives an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the phenomenon of civilization.<sup>147</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Bennabi was concerned with the central issue of Muslim backwardness, so he searched in all directions and by all intellectual means to formulate his own approach that would address the issue. He was not concerned so much with discussing the various systems of thought or philosophies, but with a systematic synthesis that would enable him to tackle this focal point.

The external intellectual factors, according to Mu, that influenced the formulation and the development of Bennabi's approach can be categorized in four main types: the Qur'an and Sunnah, psychology, philosophy, and natural science.

The Qur'an and Sunnah formed his ontology and epistemology in the context of Mu, and were a major external-intellectual factor and source of vision, concepts, and a framework for understanding and insight.

Psychology endowed him with tools for understanding the psychological role of religion on the one hand, and the transformations that occur in the human personality in the civilizing process on the other.

Philosophy opened his mind to underlying structures and theoretical frameworks in the various fields of research with which he interacted.

Finally, modern natural science imbued in him the sharpness and the strictness, as well as its quest for certainty peculiar to the field.

Reformist thought during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century encountered fertile soil for incredible efforts to reform the Muslim world. It initiated a new outlook by suggesting a new paradigm of *tajdid* that had an enduring influence on all intellectual circles. Bennabi was greatly influenced by this thought and was in fact the product of the reformist movement in terms of perspectives, ideas, and concepts. Without its endeavors in the last two centuries he would not have had the base for such reviving ideas and reform paradigms. Although he acknowledged their influence upon his thinking and was a supporter of the paradigmatic shift that the reformist movement brought to the Muslim world, he was very critical of their inability to develop a systematic methodology to apply to the issues of backwardness in the

Muslim world. He turned to psychology, together with sociology, history, and metaphysics, to look for terms, concepts, and insight to develop his analysis of the human factor in the civilizing process where he implemented the latest finds via its main branches or schools of psychoanalysis, analytical psychology, and developmental psychology. Therefore, he acquired important knowledge about psychological research and realized the necessity to integrate psychology into the study of human conditions. Bennabi's contact with a range of schools of psychology shows that he was aware of their underlying structure as well as their philosophical framework and orientation. Therefore, he was very selective in his intellectual borrowings from that field of research.

Philosophy also played its important role. Bennabi exhibited a vast knowledge of the philosophical ideas of philosophers of his time and before. However, Descartes and the discourse of Modernity were the most important aspects of philosophy which influenced his approach and ideas.

Finally, he was aware of the underlying modernist structure in various sciences, and this helped him not to confuse between their domain and that of the human and social sciences.

## *Conclusion*

### BENNABI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF CIVILIZATION

#### (1) The Critical Review of the Dominant Paradigms

This investigation has found that the study of civilization is dominated by the two disciplines of philosophy of history and social sciences. The two paradigms have also within their framework various sub-paradigms and approaches. Many thinkers acknowledge weaknesses in existing approaches due to their limitations and their single-minded and isolating perspectives. This led to the conclusion that the phenomenon of civilization requires an interdisciplinary and holistic approach that takes into consideration the complexity of its socio-cultural and socio-historical aspects.

The author chose to investigate Malek Bennabi's approach to civilization because of its interdisciplinary basis. He was one of the few theorists who tackled civilization as a multi-aspect phenomenon, and as such the metatheoretical method worked well in peeling away the layers developed by Bennabi to gain an in-depth understanding of its essence.

Bennabi's contribution can be considered an important development and an alternative to the traditionally fragmented and contradicting paradigms.



In the 1930s, Bennabi saw that the fragmented approaches to civilization of philosophy of history and social sciences, which had sprung up in French and Arab universities, were similarly incommensurable, and the best of them could not be incorporated into any functioning encompassing system.

This investigation found that he was at the forefront of many choices made in dealing with that situation. The first was a well-intentioned eclecticism he found to be a dead end because of its lack of methodological basis. The second choice was to ride the contemporary waves of ideology during his time, Marxist and liberal ideologies, which were a popular means of transcending the subject boundaries. They were dogmatic rather than scientific, and time has proven them to be inadequate. The third choice was to take the direction of understanding and studying socio-historical phenomena with a broad approach that covers all its dimensions. This latter is supported by the very nature of the phenomenon of civilization which is psychological, historical, and socio-cultural in nature.

Bennabi was very critical of the methodological errors made by the fragmented use of various sciences. The first error was the difference between the physical and the socio-cultural historical phenomena. Although Bennabi insisted that both are patterned by well established universal laws, he affirmed that the mechanistic cause and effect in the natural and physical sciences is different from that in social phenomena – civilization – which has many variables. Besides, social scientists had yet to develop more sophisticated methods for understanding the human condition as the natural scientists had done.

The second was that the dominant paradigms among social scientists were basically positivistic, and conceptualizing science this way only led to an understanding of socio-cultural and historical phenomena as viewed through the lens and concepts of the physical and natural sciences, to look only for the precision and limitation of natural phenomena in social phenomena.

Furthermore, the development of social sciences out of the paradigm of biological evolutionism and evolution theory, as well as the zeal to reach the precision and achievements of physics and natural

sciences, led social scientists to quantify findings, and to employ rules of measurement and statistical analysis.

Since they were influenced by the development of knowledge in the natural sciences, social and human scientists dealt with social phenomena just like natural and physical scientists would do with natural phenomena.

Consequently, they lacked the appropriate theoretical framework to look at their subject matter, and they failed to develop adequate methods and techniques to study social phenomena.

Although scrutinizing Bennabi's work reveals that he borrowed from various paradigms and fields of research, he was aware of the ideologies battling for dominance and their fragmented situation. He was also aware of the dominant paradigms in the social and human sciences, philosophy, and natural as well as physical sciences.

Bennabi was convinced that accepting dominant paradigms in the natural and physical sciences and applying them to the social phenomena, especially in the Muslim world, was detrimental to the specificity of Muslims who had been looking for a long time for a new synthesis of civilizing values to regain a civilizational presence.

Bennabi arrived at the conclusion that most Muslim scientists and students who went to Europe to seek knowledge could not cope with its core development of knowledge. Rather, they were mostly seeking the prestige of degrees they brought with them from European universities.

In addition, the inability to understand the spirit of Western civilization prevented Muslim elites of that time from distinguishing between established scientific traditions and ideological pursuits, pseudo-scientific postulates, and falsifications from the colonial quarters under the name of science, such as the "civilizing mission of the West" and the various justified Western modes of expansion like colonization, Eurocentricism, communism, and imperialism. Therefore, Bennabi tried to make a critical evaluation of scientific achievements in the context of the Western expansion in the world.<sup>1</sup>

For this reason he elaborated his own approach into which he incorporates the distinctiveness of Muslim civilization, and its multi-dimensional character.

This investigation found that for Bennabi neither the reactionary method which led to rejecting the scientific achievements of the West, nor the assimilationist method which led to accepting the very product of the Western scientific enterprise are able to resolve the civilizational problem in the Muslim world.

He was of the opinion that the interdisciplinary approach, which incorporates the various fields of research in an integrated way, provides the theoretical framework, the terms, the concepts, and the techniques of understanding the issue of civilization in general, and the study of Muslim civilization, in particular

## (2) Bennabi's Interdisciplinary Approach

Bennabi formulated his own paradigm capable of providing the basis for a sound approach to human conditions: civilization. He proposed his own definition of the term from different integrated perspectives, and defined its scope. This was the pivotal concern for over fifty years of his intellectual career.

The author will summarize the distinctive features of Bennabi's approach as follows:

1. Among the sciences Bennabi used are history, sociology, philosophy and psychology, but he also used indirectly religion, the Islamic religious sciences, physical sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics in developing his vision, concepts, terms, and analysis.
2. In order to systematically study the multidimensional phenomenon of civilization, he emphasized the use of historical, analytical, and comparative methods and techniques, and other processes to gain more insight into the dynamics of civilization. He was also very concerned about the historical, the social, the cultural, and the psychological dimensions.
3. Bennabi gave his own definition of civilization from different perspectives and levels, and then conceptualized civilization as the intelligible unit of study of socio-historical change.

4. He set up his major concepts that form the fundamental elements of civilization, or the very basic components of the civilizing process. He introduced his equation of civilization which takes the form of "Man + Soil + Time = Civilization." From this equation he introduced his three concepts of man (the human factor), soil and time. Then he introduced the concept of the "religious idea" which plays the role of catalyst that gives to the equation of civilization the dynamic atmosphere for its elements to interact positively.

Bennabi also conceptualized man as the primary device of civilization who needs to be oriented and integrated. Thus, he introduced the idea of orientation and the idea of the integrated man versus the disintegrated man. He saw that man, soil, and time, in addition to the religious idea, led to the formulation of three realms: of ideas, of people, and of things. Together they formulate three social categories derived from the equation of civilization.

To complete the picture of the social categories of society, Bennabi introduced the concept of the social relations network to form the fourth realm. It is the sum-total of relations between the three realms, and it links those realms internally and externally.

5. Bennabi developed his own interpretation of the path of civilization in history by looking at the phenomenon in its movement and interaction so as to grasp its dynamics. He included in his interpretation the analysis of the work of various elements of civilization in their civilizing and decivilizing processes.

In his interpretation of the path of civilization in history, he emphasized its cyclical movement, the importance of society, and the stages that society and civilization go through during their journey. Together with this emphasis he introduced the parallel group of concepts: the cycle of civilization, the three stages of civilization, the three ages of society, and the three states of the social relations network.

This inquiry found that Bennabi's interpretation of the movement of civilization presents a multi-level analysis and a multi-perspective



understanding of the social conditions of humans, and determines how the historical movement of society could be seen from different but integrated perspectives.

He presented his approach based on his own constructed paradigm that has the ability to organize and explain a specific problem area as it occurs in the real world, especially in the case of Muslim civilization.

This study also found that examining Bennabi's paradigm, based on its philosophical foundations and historical data, showed that the explanatory power of his paradigm is of great potential. In the author's opinion, this is due to his use of explanatory concepts drawn from many disciplines; his adoption of the interdisciplinary approach which enabled him to integrate all disciplines in formulating the theoretical framework of his approach; and his combination between the theoretical study of the issues of civilization and his personal experience over fifty years within two civilizational and cultural areas, Europe and the Muslim world.

The author showed that the implementation of the interdisciplinary approach develops awareness of global issues and ideas, and enables researchers to understand phenomena in their universal framework. Thus, they can establish connections and understand them in their dynamism. So, the proposed solutions will be adequate, appropriate, comprehensive, and updated.

In light of these results, the author advocates for more understanding of Bennabi's legacy as a system builder and a theorist of the interdisciplinary approach.

#### THE USEFULNESS OF *Mu*

##### (1) The Benefits of *Mu* in Discovering the Foundations of Bennabi's Approach

The author would not have achieved results without the application of *Mu* which exposed various factors that contributed to the formulation and development of Bennabi's approach.

The author applied the internal-social dimension of *Mu* to discover aspects of Bennabi's life that had an impact on his approach. Aspects of

his background and intellectual pursuits guided him to focus his life-long career on the causes of the decline in Muslim civilization. Despite his training as an electrical engineer, his fruitful experience led him to emphasize the reformulation of intellectual life in the Muslim world which he considered the starting point in the civilizational renewal.

The author found that Bennabi was influenced by personal experience (his family, religious, and educational background) and his intellectual pursuits (the activist life and the intellectual connections).

Bennabi was aware of his family's situation and the role of Islam in preserving its values and structure during the colonial era on one the hand, and the destruction of the traditional life with the advent of the colonizers on the other, obliged him to observe the destruction of social relations and the collapse of traditional institutions in Algerian society. The latter instilled in his mind the centrality of religion and the importance of the social relations network for the civilizing process.

His personal experiences related to family, religion, and education influenced the formulation of his assumptions on many issues and contributed to the development of his paradigm in dealing with various matters he related to the central unit "civilization."

Bennabi's educational background played a pivotal role in the realization that the decline of Muslim civilization was caused mostly from within, from weaknesses in the inner fabric of society, not the result of colonization.

He developed a critical view of Muslim civilization's predicament as well as European civilization by witnessing the presence of colonizers side by side with the colonized Algerians.

His religious background deeply influenced his thinking and his approach, the veracity of which was attested when the author examined his first published books and his concept of the cyclical phenomenon, as well as his understanding of the religious idea and its role in the synthesis of civilizational values.

Bennabi's functional conception of civilization was due to his long experience with the different problems he faced in Algeria and France. Furthermore, his understanding of the role of society in providing the necessities for its members was, in part, due to various problems he or his family and fellow Muslims faced in his time.

His intellectual pursuits helped him, on the one hand, to become involved in many activities that enabled him to develop his concepts and analyses based on experience and proof. On the other hand, his intellectual connections assisted him to re-evaluate, deepen and determine his concepts, to be more consistent with the whole system of his thought and development of knowledge during his time.

The external-social dimension of *Mu*, for its part, helped the author to understand how Bennabi studied the problems of civilization and examined historical change based on his understanding of the two broad processes of colonization and decolonization under the influence of which his personality formed and developed.

The author found that external-social factors helped Bennabi to determine his starting point to study civilization. His concern about the situation in Algeria and in the Muslim world during his time led him to formulate his approach for an adequate solution to the various problems that his society and the Ummah were facing.

External-social factors influenced his approach on both the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, they influenced his life during his early age when he was living and studying in Constantine, the headquarters of Ibn Badis and the reformist movement of the '*Ulamā*'. The latter was basically the school of thought to whom Bennabi related; he had ties and links with its various members and ideas. In addition, the political movement, with its various trends, shaped Bennabi's personality.<sup>2</sup>

At the macro level, living in a colonized country and studying in colonial schools in Algeria and France, Bennabi was keenly aware of his unique identity as Algerian, Arab, and Muslim. He recognized that the collective identity had been facing a process of harsh destruction for more than 132 years of French colonial rule. It was mainly a religious-intellectual and cultural process that took a long time and huge efforts by the '*Ulamā*' and other sections of the Algerian national movement to maintain.

The two processes of colonization and decolonization weighed his consciousness with the need for a comprehensive project of reform and civilizational renewal. He witnessed the destruction of traditional Algerian institutions and the destruction of the social relations

network through the systematic process of colonization, but also the efforts of reform and the national movement striving to regain Algerian identity and freedom.

For Bennabi, the hard work of both wings of the national movement, especially the '*Ulamā*', led the Algerian people to cast off the passivity of post-*al-Muwahhid* culture and to pave the way for a culture of dynamism and civilizational renewal.

The two types of experience at the macro and micro levels, led Bennabi to study the mechanisms of historical change, and made him aware of the importance of the religious idea in the formulation and promotion of a dynamic culture which generates and shapes new ideas and makes available new paradigms to tackle the issues of historical change.

Bennabi realized that the absence of Muslim civilization from the global scene weakened Muslims as individuals, to resist colonization. The downfall of some institutions and the introduction of some others during colonization and decolonization enabled Bennabi to conceptualize the distinction between what he called the post-civilized stage and the pre-civilized stage.

The reform movement and the political struggle after the World War presented to him an example of the shift in the Algerian elite which he conceptualized as a shift from the post-civilized stage of the post-*al-Muwahhid* era to the pre-civilized stage of a new Muslim civilizational cycle, which in turn needs more systematic efforts to further its civilizing process.

My study found that some parts of Bennabi's approach, specifically his concept of the social relations network, its function, and the role of religion in providing the dynamic interaction for the element of civilization were not mere theoretical concepts resulting from his contemplations, but were also the result of his observations.

Bennabi's long experience gave him an insider's view on the dynamics and the possibilities of renewing the Muslim civilization in modern times. He was able to understand the factors that contributed to its decline and to comprehend the internal and external causes of the malaise manifested in the Algerian drama.



Accordingly, since his first published book he called for a strategy in the Algerian affair within the framework of a civilization. He considered that to resolve the various problems, of which colonization and colonizability are part, we have to resolve the basic problems that form the basis of the entire crisis.

As Bennabi saw it, in the case of Algeria where civilization was in a state of stagnation, all proposed solutions had to take into consideration every facet of cultural identity and the general framework to which the society belonged. The author found that based on his social and historical experience he proposed a new paradigm for the problems of the Muslim world, including the problems of colonization and colonizability. He proposed an analysis of human conditions and societal change within the structure of civilization as the unit of analysis and framework for relating to different aspects of one issue.

Applying the internal-intellectual dimension of *Mu* the author discovered that Bennabi was aware of the dominant paradigms in the study of civilization, and that the development of his concepts of the cyclical movement of civilization, the religious idea, the typology of societies, and his concept of the functional definition of civilization as well as his understanding of the transitory aspect of civilization and its dynamism were a result of his critical review of those paradigms, schools, and approaches.

Bennabi was not satisfied with the two disciplines of philosophy of history and the social sciences, with various schools and singular approaches to the study of civilization. He claimed that they were mainly philosophical contemplations on the historical data given to them by historians. Moreover, each school emphasized some different pattern in the historical change of civilization.

In various passages of his books he revised, evaluated, and criticized the various interpretations since he considered that none of them were adequate.

Taking into account Kuhn's idea of paradigm shift or Kung's idea of paradigm change there was a need for a new paradigm for the study of civilization. In Kuhn's term, there was a paradigm crisis in the study of civilization. The author noticed that Bennabi was aware of this crisis and the need for a breakthrough in the domain of civilization studies.

Bennabi's critical review of the two disciplines of philosophy of history and the social sciences enabled him to avoid the conflict between different views when he did not restrict himself to a partial inclination or put himself in support of or at odds with such approaches.

Although he borrowed many of his concepts and terms from the available sources, he put interpreted them in a way that allowed him to be a system builder who dealt with various systems of thought without losing his originality and specific features.

At the methodological level, Bennabi applied the methods of historians through his historical examination of various events and changes in history. He used them also to open his analysis of the insights of speculative as well as critical philosophy of history. He could work with a perspective not necessarily restricted to the inherited positivistic and empiricist understanding of knowledge.

His examination of the various sociological and social scientific schools and paradigms enabled him to perform a double task: on the one hand, he could formulate, sharpen, and develop his concepts in light of modern achievements in the social sciences, especially their use of qualitative and quantitative methods. On the other hand, he was very critical of the materialist and secular conceptions of knowledge and historical change those social sciences adopted.

In formulating his ideas, Bennabi focused on the need for an interdisciplinary approach to civilization which takes all relevant disciplines into consideration. He openly called for the adoption of such an approach and was convinced that the study of civilization needs history, sociology, psychology, philosophy and other sciences, and even mathematics and the physical sciences are important to precisely define terms and concepts.

Consequently, at the intellectual and cognitive level, Bennabi's approach integrates and borrows from various disciplines to tackle the complicated issue of civilization that has three main dimensions: historical, social, and cultural dimensions.

The author applied the external-intellectual dimension of *Mu* to find borrowed concepts, visions, terms, and methods from external intellectual activities; the focus was on the cognitive and intellectual rather than social aspects of those activities.

External-intellectual factors included the Qur'an and Sunnah, the religious reformist thought in the Muslim world, psychology, the natural sciences, philosophy, and other intellectual activities external to the field of study and its two traditional dominant paradigms.

Bennabi's concern about the central issue of Muslim backwardness led him to search for all possible ways and intellectual means to formulate his own approach. He was not interested in discussing the various systems of thought but in a systematic synthesis that enabled him to tackle this concern.

In the context of *Mu*, the Qur'an and Sunnah influenced the formulation and the development of Bennabi's approach to civilization. He adopted them for their vision, concepts, and as a framework for understanding and insight. In other words, the Qur'an and Sunnah formed his ontology and epistemology; psychology endowed him with the tools for understanding the psychological role of religion, and the transformations that occur in the human personality in the civilizing process.

Reformist thought and the new paradigm of *tajdid* had an everlasting influence on all intellectual quarters in the Muslim world in general, and on Bennabi in particular. Although he was very critical of the reformists' inability to develop a systematic methodology for the issues of backwardness in the Muslim world, he acknowledged their influence upon his thinking and the paradigmatic change that the reformist movement had initiated.

Therefore, in terms of perspective, ideas, and conceptions, Bennabi was the product of the reformist movement. Without the heritage he inherited from those prominent reformers, he would not have been able to step ahead to develop his own approach to civilization, in general, and to Muslim civilization, in particular.

The author also discovered that psychology's terms, concepts, and insights were key to his understanding and aided in the analysis of the human factor in the civilizing process. He implemented the latest developments in this field of research through its main branches or schools of psychoanalysis, analytical psychology, and developmental psychology. He also integrated psychology into the study of human conditions but was very selective in his intellectual borrowings from this field of research. Philosophy also played an important role in

which Bennabi showed vast knowledge. Although other philosophers were mentioned in Bennabi's books, the philosophical dissertation that influenced him and made him aware of many ideas in Western civilization was Descartes' discourse of Modernity.

With the Cartesian background of modern critical philosophy and the modernist underlying structure of various sciences, Bennabi did not confuse between their domain and that of the human and the social sciences.

It is the author's belief that "civilization" as a multidimensional phenomenon has attracted the attention of many researchers throughout history. The diversity of approaches, schools, and paradigms on how to study civilization has led to a continuing debate. However, the author's opinion is that differences can be put within two general and broad paradigms that have dominated the study of civilization: philosophy of history and the social sciences. Both paradigms include a wide range of schools and approaches.

The author's thesis also showed that Bennabi was not satisfied with the literature produced by those two paradigms regarding the study of civilization. Thus, he called for an interdisciplinary approach.

Based on the literature reviewed, Bennabi's approach has yet to be discovered and it is not systematically understood. Current texts do not show any comprehensive attempt to find out the underlying structure of his approach and to look for the roots of its formulation and development.

Hence, this study argued that it is only through metatheorizing that Bennabi's approach will be deeply understood because *Mu* provides a multilevel analysis. I reached two most important objectives: Bennabi's main contribution is his interdisciplinary approach to civilization, and metatheorizing (*Mu*) is the most productive methodology to study the formulation and development of ideas, theories, and approaches.

## (2) The Methodological Tools *Mu* Provides

One of the results of this study is that metatheorizing (*Mu*) is a comprehensive methodology with multi-levels of analysis and multi-dimensional perspectives to study the formulation and development of ideas, approaches, theories, and fields of research.



(a) *Mu* provides paradigmatic understanding of ideas, theories, and theories with the use of some distinctive concepts such as paradigm change, micro macro levels, schools and approaches, internal, external social and intellectual.

Applying the concept of "paradigm" and "school" enabled the author to find dominant trends of thought that traditionally dominated the study of civilization. It also helped the author to understand the changes that occurred historically within the field of civilization studies in the broad perspective, and to look at those changes in their interrelatedness and totality.

Both terms played a methodological role in providing a means of categorization used to distinguish between various ideas and historical eras. Therefore, it is easy to classify to which school Bennabi belongs and to which paradigm he was inclined.

Moreover, the micro and macro levels of analysis helped the author to look at the socio-historical processes wherein Bennabi developed his approach. The micro-macro continuum provided a link between the macro and micro historical contexts. The two levels of analysis together helped the author to study Bennabi's approach (the case) from the smallest circle to the larger context. Thus, Bennabi's background (education, family, religious background, and intellectual ties) as the circles of the micro level were linked together with the socio-historical context (colonization and decolonization processes) as the two broad macro historical and social contexts that provided the atmosphere in which Bennabi grew and developed his ideas.

Using the four dimensions helped the author to incorporate all factors that internally, externally, socially, and intellectually contributed to the formulation and development of Bennabi's approach.

The distinction between the intellectual dimension and the social dimension provides a methodological tool to look for Bennabi's social and intellectual structure. Here *Mu* combines the sociology of knowledge and the philosophy of science by looking at the communal and cognitive aspects of knowledge.

Moreover, internal and external or intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives give a broad understanding of the process that contributed to the formulation and development of ideas, approaches, and theories.

In this regard, the internal social and the external social dimensions (factors) provided a horizon for the author to look for the micro level and the macro level of the socio-historical processes that contributed to the development of the approach.

By means of *Mu* and internal-external social factors the author was able to distinguish between both dimensions of social factors. The absence of those dimensions, as methodological tools, in the literature available about Bennabi prevents categorization of which factors were internal and which were external in their study of Bennabi's intellectual legacy. Although some writers emphasized colonization and the historical situation, as well as Bennabi's career as an engineer, they did not systematically analyze them.

At the internal social level, the present study showed that personal experience and interests were very important to understand his approach. Metatheoretically, Bennabi's background was used to find the link between his approach and his personal life, while his intellectual pursuits were used as an internal social tool to understand very basic micro links that Bennabi had at the social level rather than at the intellectual level.

At the external social level, *Mu* extended the concern over a broad socio-historical context in which Bennabi gained experience and enriched his knowledge and conscience with new ideas and concepts, especially the colonization and the decolonization processes.

The author was able to find the intellectual roots of Bennabi's approach through the internal/external intellectual dimension; *Mu* as a metatheoretical tool helped the author to understand the intellectual structure of Bennabi's approach with an analysis of internal and external factors. The difference between internal and external intellectual factors is one of the contributions of *Mu* about which the available literature about Bennabi did not pay much attention. However, its application enabled the author to find Bennabi's internal intellectual field of research, especially through the paradigmatic understanding of the historical development of the study of civilization.

With the internal intellectual dimension of *Mu* the author found out that civilization is Bennabi's internal field of study, and that it was dominated by the two paradigms of the philosophy of history and the

social sciences on the one hand, and the external intellectual dimension on the other. The author was also enlightened about the auxiliary fields of research that helped Bennabi develop his approach to civilization.

(b) *Mu* incorporates an intrinsic and extrinsic understanding of the subject matter as well as a combination of the sociology of knowledge, philosophy of science, and history of ideas. Therefore, it emphasizes the internal and external dynamics of knowledge and its social structure, and the cognitive basis as well as the historical dimension of ideas.

Metatheorizing provides tools to see the formulation and development of knowledge as determined by internal factors (internal logic) and external factors (social and cultural context). Therefore, *Mu* studies knowledge not only as internal dialectic (history of ideas and philosophy of science) or a social phenomenon (sociology of knowledge), but combines all of them in one set of dimensions that basically provides a paradigmatic understanding of the development of knowledge.

*Mu* does not replace other sciences or methodologies for studying the development of knowledge, but it provides a set of tools that takes into consideration all dimensions and factors that influence the formulation and development of knowledge. Therefore, the author believes that metatheorizing (*Mu*), because of its comprehensiveness, may play a better role in gaining an in-depth understanding of theories and approaches as well as the development of knowledge in general.

Finally, the author calls for more emphasis on the interdisciplinary approach to the study of civilization that Bennabi formulated and developed, and for the adoption of the metatheorizing approach in studying the formulation and development of ideas, approaches, theories, and fields of research for its potential to provide a comprehensive understanding of the genesis and growth of knowledge.

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations', pp. 22-49.
2. Sanderson, 'Civilizational Approaches to World-Historical Change', p. 15.
3. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, p. 40.
4. Jadan, 'Usus al-Ta'addum 'Inda Mufakkiri al-Islam fi al-'Alam al-'Arabi al-Hadith', p. 416; Rashid, 'Iqbal and Malek Bennabi', p. 12.
5. Ibrahim, (Keynote Address).
6. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. ix.
7. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 19.
8. Talbi, 'The Implication of Malek Bennabi's View on Contemporary Muslim Society', p. 1.
9. Arif, *Ḥadārah, Thaḳāfah, Madaniyyah*, p. 252.
10. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, pp. 9-10.
11. Hassan, 'Reflections on Some of the Ideas and Thoughts of Malek Bennabi', (Presented Paper).
12. Henwood, 'Qualitative Inquiry: Perspectives, Methods and Psychology', p. 31.

13. Ritzer, 'Reflections on the Rise of Metatheorizing in Sociology', vol. 34, no. 3.
14. Zhao, 'Metatheory, Metamethod, Meta-Data-Analysis: What, Why, and How', vol. 34, no. 3.
15. Ibid.
16. Neufeldt, et al, *Webster's New World Dictionary*, p. 851, 1587.
17. Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, p. 621.
18. Ritzer et al., 'The Changing Nature of Neo-Marxist Theory: A Metatheoretical Analysis', vol. 34, no. 3.
19. Ritzer, *Modern Sociological Theory*.
20. Ritzer, 'Reflections on the Rise of Metatheorizing in Sociology'; 'The Legitimation and Institutionalization of Metatheorizing in Sociology', pp. 543-561.
21. Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, p. 487.
22. Ritzer, *Metatheorizing*, p. 22. Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, p. 487.
23. Ritzer, 'Sociological Theories in Progress', p. 17.
24. Ritzer, *Modern Sociological Theory*, p. 487.



25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. It should be noted here that putting the Qur'an within the fourth dimension of Mu does not imply that the Qur'an is an external source for Bennabi's thought. It is put in this fourth dimension where it pertains to the traditional approaches and paradigms of civilization studies within academic circles. I am aware of this, therefore on the one hand I treat the influence of the Qur'an in shaping Bennabi's personality, religious, and educational background – within the internal social dimension of (Mu); on the other hand, I point out the influence of the Qur'an in formulating Bennabi's viewpoint, concepts and terms within the external intellectual dimension of Mu.
28. Ritzer, 'Reflections on the Rise of Metatheorizing in Sociology'.
29. Zhao, 'Metatheory, Metamethod, Meta-Data-Analysis: What, Why, and How', vol. 34, no. 3.
30. Lawler, et al, 'Metatheory and Friendly Competition in Theory Growth: The Case of Power Processes in Bargaining', p.174.
31. Ritzer, 'Reflections on the Rise of Metatheorizing in Sociology', pp.246–247.
32. Ibid., pp.237–248.
33. Beg, *Islamic and Western Concepts of Civilization*, p.51.
34. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*, p.16.
35. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, pp.26–27.
36. Masterman, 'The Nature of a Paradigm', pp.59–63.
37. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p.175; Ritzer, *Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science*, p.7; Ritzer, *Toward an Integrated Sociological Paradigm*, p.3; Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, p.629; Lacey, *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, p.169; Masterman, 'The Nature of Paradigm', p.66; Riazi, *A Dictionary of Research Methods*, p.186; Guba, et al, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research', p.107.
38. Ritzer, *Toward an Integrated Sociological Paradigm*, pp.12–13.
39. Ritzer, *Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science*, p.239.
40. Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, p.636; Collins, 'On The Microfoundations of Macrosociology', pp.984–86.
41. Harvey, 'The Nature of "Schools" in the Sociology of Knowledge: The Case of the "Chicago School"', pp.245–247; Allen, *Socio-cultural Dynamics: An Introduction to Social Change*, p.29; Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, p.190.

## CHAPTER I

1. Beg, *Perspectives of Civilization*, pp.20–21.
2. Brinton, et al, *A History of Civilization*, p.3.
3. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p.40.
4. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p.9; Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, p.3.
5. Weiner, *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, p.613; Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p.273; Coomaraswamy, *What is Civilization?*, p.1.
6. Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, p.3.
7. Simpson, et al, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, pp.256–258.
8. Urdang, *The Oxford Thesaurus*, p.62.
9. Weiner, *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, p.613; Clough, *The Rise and Fall of Civilization: An Inquiry into the Relationship Between Economic Development and Civilization*, p.3.
10. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, p.32.
11. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p.41.
12. Clough, *The Rise and Fall of Civilization*, p.3.
13. Ibid.
14. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p.41.
15. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, p.1.
16. Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p.274.
17. Childe, *What Happened in History*, p.117.
18. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p.41.
19. Chandler, *Beyond Civilization: The World's Four Great Streams of Civilization: Their Achievements, Their Differences, and Their Future*, p.1.
20. Abdel-Malek, 'The Civilizational Orientation in the Making of the New World', pp.571–572.
21. Weiner, *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, p.616.
22. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, p.3.
23. Ibid., pp.4–5.
24. Ibid., p.6.
25. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p.43.
26. Ibid., p.40.
27. Ibid., p.43.
28. Ibid., pp.40–44.
29. Ibid., p.47.
30. Ibid., p.42.
31. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, pp.196–197.
32. Bustani, *Kitāb Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, p.175.
33. Lane, *An Arabic English Lexicon*, p.2155.
34. Ibid., p.2156.
35. Cowan, *Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, pp.183–185, 898–899.
36. Ibid.
37. Beg, *Perspectives of Civilization*, p.28; Cowan, *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, p.899.

38. Boyle, *A Practical Dictionary of the Persian Language*, pp. 44–50.
39. Beg, *Islamic and Western Concepts of Civilization*.
40. (ŠAAS) – *Šallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. May the peace and blessings of God be upon him. Said whenever the name of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned.
41. Holton, *Cities, Capitalism and Civilization*, p. 2.
42. Ibid., pp. 120–121.
43. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, p. 84.
44. Ibid., p. 89.
45. Beg, *Perspectives of Civilization*, p. 30.
46. Arif, *Hadārah, Thaqāfah, Madaniyyah*, pp. 42–45; Beg, *Perspectives of Civilization*, p. 28.
47. Beg, *Islamic and Western Concepts of Civilization*, p. 20.
48. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 1986.
49. Outhwait & Bottomore, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth Century Social Thought*, p. 77; Brinton, *A History of Civilization*, p. 3; Armillas, 'The Concept of Civilization', p. 218.
50. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 1–3; Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p. 247; Siddiqui, *A Philosophical Interpretation of History*, p. 2.
51. Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation in History: An Introduction to The Philosophy of History*, pp. 7–8; Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 1.
52. Hutchins, et al, *Gateway to the Great Books*, pp. 108–109.
53. McNeill, *The Expansion of the West: A History of the Human Community*.
54. Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation in History*, p. 210.
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56. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*.
57. Miral, 'Ibn Khaldūn and Vico, A Comparative Study', pp. 199–205.
58. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 67–68.
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60. Breisach, *Historiography*, p. 397.
61. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, pp. 1–6, 3–11.
62. Gardiner, *Theories of History*, p. 200; McGreal, *Great Thinkers of the Western World*, pp. 515–517.
63. Breisach, *Historiography*, p. 399.
64. Kroeber, *Anthropology: Culture Patterns and Processes*, p. 11.
65. Moore, *Visions of Culture*, p. 17, 27.
66. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, p. 1.
67. Moore, *Visions of Culture*, p. 11.
68. Kroeber, *Anthropology*, p. 11.
69. Ibid., p. 6.
70. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, pp. 40–41; Brinton et al., *A History of Civilization*, p. 2.

71. Ember, et al, *Anthropology*, p. 4.
72. Kroeber, *Anthropology*, pp. 4–5.
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74. Tylor, *Dictionary of Anthropology*, p. 117.
75. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 40.
76. Mennell, 'The Sociological Study of History: Institutions and Social Development', p. 59.
77. Mennell, 'The Sociological Study of History', p. 61.
78. Nolan, et al, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, p. 4.
79. Ibid.
80. Borgatta et al., *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, p. 1169.
81. Nolan, et al, *Human Societies*, p. 4.
82. Marshall, *A Dictionary of Sociology*, p. 379; Sanderson, 'Civilizational Approaches to World-Historical Change', p. 15.
83. Jary, et al, *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, pp. 378–379.
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87. Sorokin, *Society, Culture, and Personality, Their Structure and Dynamics*, p. 635.
88. Lauer, *Perspectives on Social Change*, p. 4.
89. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*.
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93. Kroeber, *Anthropology*, p. 12.
94. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*.
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96. Ibid., p. 297; Sanderson, 'Civilizational Approaches to World-Historical Change', p. 15.
97. Dhaouadi, 'Ibn Khaldūn: The Founding Father of Eastern Sociology', p. 319; Ritzer, *Sociological Beginnings*, p. 28; Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 2.
98. Ritzer, *Sociological Beginnings*, pp. 28–29.
99. Sorokin, *Society, Culture, and Personality*, pp. 636–637.
100. Ibid., p. 639.
101. Ibid., p. 630.
102. Burns, *Western Civilizations: Their History and Their Culture*.
103. Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, p. 9.
104. Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p. 275.



## CHAPTER 2

1. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.40.
2. Ibid., p.31,40.
3. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p.147.
4. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p.113.
5. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, pp.52-53.
6. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.31, 152-153.
7. Bennabi, *Fikrat Commonwealth Islāmī*, p.26.
8. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p.150.
9. Bennabi, *Dawr al-Muslim wa Risālatuh fi al-Thuluth al-Akḥir Min al-Qarn al-Ishrin*, p.46.
10. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.19.
11. Ibid., p.41.
12. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, pp.1-11.
13. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.61.
14. Bennabi, *Millād Mujtama'*, p.75; *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.89.
15. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*; Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*; Ubadah, *Ṣafahāt Mushriqah Min Fikr Malik Bin Nabī*; Ukashah, *Al-Sirā' al-Hadārī fi al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*; al-Sahmarani, *Malik Bin Nabī Muḥakkiran Ishlahiyyam*; al-Khatib, *'Usus Falsafat al-Hadārāh fi al-Islāmī*; al-Milad, *Malik Bin Nabī wa Mushkilāt al-Hadārāh*.
16. Gassum, *'Ishkālīyat al-Hadārāh fi Fikr Malik Bin Nabī*, pp.290-298.
17. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas in The Muslim World*, p.26.
18. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, p.91.
19. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p.26.
20. Bennabi, *Ta'ammulāt*, p.116.
21. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p.25.
22. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, p.43.
23. Bennabi, *Millād Mujtama'*, p.88.
24. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p.41.
25. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.5.
26. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.42.
27. Ibid., p.43.
28. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p.147.
29. Bennabi, *Bayna al-Rashād wa al-Tayh*, p.37.
30. Al-Jafairi, *Mushkilāt al-Hadārāh 'Inda Malik Bin Nabī*, pp.63-64.
31. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.61.
32. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.89.
33. Bennabi, *Mushkilāt al-Thaqāfah*, p.40.
34. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.71; *Millād Mujtama'*, p.52.
35. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.119.

36. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, p.7.
37. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.45.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p.50.
40. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, p.55.
41. Bennabi, *Ta'ammulāt*, p.170.
42. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.50.
43. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, pp.150-151.
44. Ibid., pp.45-46.
45. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, p.102; *Ta'ammulāt*, pp.21-22.
46. Bennabi, *Fikrat Commonwealth Islāmī*, pp.52-53.
47. Bennabi, *Millād Mujtama'*, p.113.
48. Bennabi, *Wijhat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, p.52.
49. Qur'an, 13:11.
50. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p.10; *Wijhat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, pp.32-33.
51. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p.10.
52. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.145.
53. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.75.
54. Both Imam al-Bukhārī and Imam Muslim report this hadith. Al-Bukhārī reported it in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book of Funerals, while Muslim reported it in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book of Fate.
55. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.76.
56. Bennabi, *Mushkilāt al-Thaqāfah*, p.100.
57. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p.90.
58. Bennabi, *Ta'ammulāt*, pp.190-191.
59. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, pp.78-79.
60. Bennabi, *Bayna al-Rashād wa al-Tayh*, p.81; *Mushkilāt al-Thaqāfah*, p.67.
61. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.77.
62. Bennabi, *Hadith fi al-Binā' al-Jadīd*, p.110.
63. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p.169.
64. Barghuth, *Mawqif al-Mas'alah al-Thaqāfiyyah fi Istrātiyyat al-Tajdid al-Hadārī 'Inda Malik Bin Nabī*, p.14.
65. Bennabi, *Mushkilāt al-Thaqāfah*, p.74.
66. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.108.
67. Bennabi, *Al-Muslim fi 'Ālam al-Iqtisād*, p.82.
68. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p.112.
69. Ibid., pp.112-113.
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72. Ibid., pp.45-46.
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74. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, p.58.
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76. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p.54.

77. Ibid., p. 11.
78. Ibid.
79. Talbi, 'The Implication of Malek Bennabi's View', p. 13.
80. Bennabi, *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, p. 69.
81. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 89.
82. Bennabi, *Qadāyā Kubrā*, p. 60.
83. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 14.
84. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 14.
85. Ibid., p. 51.
86. Bennabi, *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, (1983), p. 184.
87. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, p. 15.
88. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 155.
89. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 28.
90. Ibid., p. 27.
91. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 24.
92. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 50.
93. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 28.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., p. 39.
96. Ibid., p. 18.
97. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 40.
98. Ibid., pp. 47-54.
99. *Ghār Hīrā'*: This is the place where the Prophet Muhammad received the first verses of the Qur'an.
100. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, pp. 48-49.
101. Ibid., p. 25.
102. Ibid., p. 41.
103. Ibid., p. 47.
104. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 37.
105. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 41.
106. Ibid., p. 42.
107. Ibid.
108. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 27.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid., p. 27.
112. Ibid., p. 270.
113. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 27.
114. Ibid., p. 28.
115. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 29.
116. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, p. 45.
117. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 3.
118. Bennabi, *Al-Muslim fi 'Ālam al-Iqtisād*, p. 60.
119. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, p. 48.
120. Bennabi, *Bayna al-Rashād wa al-Tayb*, p. 35.
121. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, pp. 48-49.
122. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 5.
123. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 9.
124. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 11.
125. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, pp. 7-8.
126. Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, p. 3.
127. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 13.
128. Ibid.
129. Bennabi, *On the Origins of*

- Human Society*, p. 10; *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 14.
130. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 14.
  131. Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3

1. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 7.
2. Ibid., p. 6; *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 66; *The Problem of Ideas*, pp. 27-28.
3. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 66.
4. Ibid., p. 47.
5. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, p. 82.
6. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 7.
7. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 66; *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 27; *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 63.
8. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 76.
9. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 89.
10. Ibid., pp. 63-64; *Milād Mujtama'*, pp. 55-56.
11. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 56; *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 64.
12. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 76; *On the Origins of Human Society*, pp. 88-90.
13. Qur'an, 61: 4.
14. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, pp. 70-71.
15. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 67.
16. Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ: one of the Companions of the Prophet

Muhammad. He was a slave who joined the Prophet's call for Islam. He suffered, with other early Muslims, from the torture of the Makkkan pagans.

17. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 41.
18. Abbasid: The third caliphate in Muslim political history, established after the fall of the Umayyad caliphate in 132 AH.
19. Aghlabid: One of the dynasties in North Africa during the 7th century of the Muslim era.
20. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 90.
21. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 77.
22. *Al-Murī'ah*: One of the sects in early Muslim history. They believed that a Muslim did not lose his faith by committing such sins. This doctrine led them to a far-reaching quietism in politics; according to their doctrine, the ruler (imam) who was guilty of mortal sin did not cease to be a Muslim and should still be obeyed. Their opponents were al-khawārij who thought that a Muslim who committed a mortal sin (*kabīrah*) became an infidel (*kāfir*).
23. *Al-Qarāmīṭah* was a revolutionary movement in lower Mesopotamia towards the end of the 3rd century of the Muslim era based on the system of communism. They formed a state for a period of time independent from the caliphate in Baghdad. Its ideas were derived from the Ismā'īlī



- gnostic philosophy and pre-Islamic Persian and pagan beliefs. However, its state and thought as well as its beliefs did not remain for long and soon disappeared from the scene, although there were some efforts in modern times to revive its teachings by many communists and secularists.
24. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.91.
  25. The Umayyad caliphate was the second in Muslim political history, established in 34 AH; it lasted until 132 AH.
  26. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, pp.68–69.
  27. Ibid.
  28. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.91.
  29. *Mulūk al-Tawā'if* were petty or partisan kings. This term refers to the later period of Muslim Spain (Andalusia) history when Muslims were divided into smaller, weak monarchies and dynasties, at the head of which were self-interested kings or monarchs who did not care about the fate of the Muslim community there, and who plotted and conspired against each other by seeking the support of non-Muslims. Thus, they lost their monarchies, were expelled from Spain, and this marked the end of Muslim Spain (Andalusia).
  30. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p.40.
  31. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p.69.
  32. Ibid., pp.69–70.
  33. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.9; Ritzer, *Sociological Beginnings*, pp.28–29.
  34. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p.54.
  35. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p.97.
  36. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p.112.
  37. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.132.
  38. Talbi, 'The Implication of Malek Bennabi's View', p.2.
  39. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p.20.
  40. Ibid., pp.20–21.
  41. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p.70.
  42. Ibid., pp.70–71.
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  52. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, pp.20–21.
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  54. Ibid.
  55. Talbi, 'The Implication of Malek Bennabi's View', p.2.

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60. Ibid.
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66. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p.19.
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69. Ibid., p.22.
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87. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, pp.29–31.
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90. Ibid., p.28.
91. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.41.
92. Ibid.
93. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p.37.
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104. Talbi, 'The Implication of Malek Bennabi's View', p.8.
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7. Ritzer, *Metatheorizing*, p. 20; *Sociological Theory*, p. 683.
8. Hankin, quoted in Ritzer, *Modern Sociological Theory*, p. 638.
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12. al-Bathī, *Shakhṣiyyāt Islāmiyyah Mu'āṣirah*, p. 197.
13. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 19.
14. al-Qurayshi, *Al-Taghyir al-Ijtima'i 'Inda Malik Bin Nabi*, p. 32.
15. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 16.
16. al-Qurayshi, *Al-Taghyir al-Ijtima'i*, p. 32.
17. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, pp. 16–17.
18. Ibid., p. 20.
19. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*.
20. al-Idrsi, 'Makānat al-Mar'ah fi Fikr Malik Bin Nabi', p. 347.
21. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 269, 273, 298.
22. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. 82.
23. Ukashah, *Al-Sira' al-Hadīri fi al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, p. 9.
24. *Zāwiyah* is the school of the Sufi order or the religious brotherhood.
25. *Kutāb* is the traditional school where Algerian Muslim children memorized the Qur'an at an early age.
26. *Madrasah* is the Algerian Arabic traditional school where children received their education: they learned the Arabic language, the basics of logic, mathematics, and religion.
27. Hadith(s) are the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad considered the second source of Islamic teachings beside the Qur'an.
28. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 23.
29. Ibid., p. 28.
30. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. 34.
31. Imam, in its jurisprudential sense, is an Islamic term meaning "the religious scholar who leads Muslims in prayer and gives lectures and sermons in the mosque."
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33. Ibid., p. 66.
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39. Ibid., pp. 24–25.
40. Al-Faruqi, 'Islamization of Knowledge: Problems, Principles, and Prospective', pp. 16–17.
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52. Ibid.
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54. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 114.
55. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, p. 48.
56. Ibid., p. 172.
57. Bennabi, *Shurāt al-Nahḍah*, pp. 22–23.
58. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, pp. 85–87.
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60. Ibid., p. 136.
61. Ibid., pp. 159–160.
62. Ibid., p. 161.
63. Ibid., p. 173.
64. Ibid., pp. 191–196.
65. Ibid., p. 204.
66. Ibid., p. 219.
67. Ibid., pp. 209–210.
68. Ibid., p. 210.
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73. Ibid., p. 214.
74. Ibid., p. 212.
75. Ibid., p. 216.
76. Ibid., pp. 218–219.
77. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. 78.
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79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., p. 220.
81. Mughli, 'Malik Bin Nabi Kāna Ummatan Waḥdah', p. 286.
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83. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 236.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., *Shurāt al-Nahḍah*, p. 9.
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103. Ibid., p.226.
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107. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*; Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*.
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14. Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History*, p.30.
15. Ibid., p.30.
16. Hutchins et al., *Gateway to the Great Books*, p.109.
17. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p.9.
18. Ibid., p.19.
19. Ibid., pp.17-19.
20. Ibid., p.456.
21. Herman, *The Idea of Decline*, p.33.
22. Wallbank, et al, *Civilization Past and Present*, p.5.
23. Marx and Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto', p.4.
24. Herman, *The Idea of Decline*, p.34.
25. Hutchins et al., *Gateway to the Great Books*, p.109.
26. Herman, *The Idea of Decline*, p.35; Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory*, p.75.
27. Comte, 'From Metaphysics to Positivist Science', p.45; Pickering, *Auguste Comte; An Intellectual Biography*, p.188, 564, 669; Whittaker, *Comte and Mill*, pp.15-16, 21.
28. Gordon, *The History and Philosophy of Social Science*, p.287; Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, p.669.
29. Comte, 'From Metaphysics to Positivist Science'; Whittaker, *Comte and Mill*, pp.15-16; Braham, et al, *Sociological Thought From Comte to Sorokin*, pp.7-8.
30. Scharff, *Comte After Positivism*, p.74, 77-91; Bryant, *Positivism in Social Theory and Research*, p.28.
31. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, p.669.
32. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p.62.
33. Ibid.
34. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.19.
35. Bennabi, *Milād Muḥtama'*, p.18.
36. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p.19; *Milād Muḥtama'*, p.21.
37. Bennabi, *Milād Muḥtama'*, p.18.

38. Ibid.
39. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 20.
40. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 63.
41. Ibid.
42. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 63.
43. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 8.
44. Bennabi, *Milād Muḥitama*, p. 22.
45. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 63.
46. Ibid., p. 72.
47. Bennabi, *Milād Muḥitama*, p. 22.
48. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 20.
49. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 65.
50. Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*, p. 27.
51. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 9.
52. Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*.
53. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, p. 7.
54. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, pp. 62-64.
55. Sanderson, 'Civilizational Approaches to World-Historical Change', p. 15.
56. Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation in History*, p. 210.
57. Sanderson, 'Civilizational Approaches to World-Historical Change', p. 15, 21.
58. Melko, 'The Nature of Civilizations', p. 26.
59. 'Aṣabiyyah' expresses tribal feelings or ties that bind the members of the same tribe. However, it may also express group feeling, as interpreted from reading the contents of *The Muqaddimah*.
60. Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldūn: The Birth of History and the Past of the Third World*, p. 142; Khalifa, *An Analytical Study of 'Asabiyya': Ibn Khaldūn's Theory of Social Conflict*, p. 1; al-Husari, *Dirāsāt 'an Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, pp. 175-177; Ritzer, *Sociological Beginnings*, pp. 28-29; Richter, 'Medieval Arabic Historiography', p. 240.
61. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, p. 58.
62. Lauer, *Perspectives on Social Change*, p. 35.
63. al-Wardī, *Mantiq Ibn Khaldūn fi daw' Haḍarath wa Shakhṣiyyatihi*, p. 180.
64. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, pp. 158-160; *The Muqaddimah*, pp. 343-346.
65. Ibid., *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 160; *The Muqaddimah*, p. 346.
66. Ibid., *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 195; *The Muqaddimah*, p. 344.
67. Ibid., *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 159; *The Muqaddimah*, pp. 344-345.
68. Ibid., *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*.
69. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, p. 345.
70. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, pp. 163-165; Ibid., *The Muqaddimah*, pp. 353-355.
71. Ibid., *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 147.
72. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, p. 320.

73. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 148.
74. Arnold Toynbee (1889-1980) was a British historian and philosopher of civilization. A *Study of History* is his main contribution to history, and the philosophy of history and civilization. He introduced concepts like challenge and response, the creative minority, the dominant minority, the internal proletariat, the external proletariat, the time of trouble, the universal church, the volkerwanderung, interregnum, and the Weltanschauung. He believed that the religions of the world provided the soil from which civilizations grew.
75. Breisch, *Historiography*, p. 399.
- Hourani, *A Vision of History*; Gargan, *The Intent of Toynbee's History*, p. 9.
76. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, p. 50, 172, 175; *A Study of History* (Abridged), pp. 1-6, 11-12.
77. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, pp. 22-50, 3-11.
78. Gargan, *The Intent of Toynbee's History*, p. 9; Gardiner, *Theories of History*, p. 200.
79. Gardiner, *Theories of History*, p. 208; Toynbee, *A Study of History*, pp. 270-277, 1-3, 112-131, 320-380.
80. A dominant minority is, by definition, a ruling class that has ceased to lead and has become oppressive.
81. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, pp. 1-6, 548.
82. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*.
83. Ibid., *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 71.
84. Jadan, 'Usus al-Taḥaddud', p. 416; Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. 115; al-Khātīb, *Falsafat al-Hadārah*, p. 53.
85. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 49; *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*, p. 20.
86. Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*, p. 27; *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 62.
87. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 7.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 62.
91. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 8.
92. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubrā*, p. 172.
93. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 98; *Wijhat al-'Alam al-Islāmī*, p. 23.
94. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 42; *The Muqaddimah*, p. 76.
95. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 146; *The Muqaddimah*, p. 319.
96. Bennabi, *Ta'ammulāt*, p. 198; *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, p. 69.
97. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 165; *The Muqaddimah*, p. 343, 346.
98. Said, *Ḥaṭṭa Yughayyir mā Bi Anfusihi*, p. 20, from Bennabi's introduction to Said's book.



99. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, pp. 7–8; *Wijhat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, p. 28.
100. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, p. 156.
101. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 19.
102. Ibid.
103. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 21.
104. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, pp. 23–24.
105. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, pp. 1–6, 88–139; Sanderson, 'Civilizational Approaches to World-Historical Change', p. 16.
106. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, p. 65.
107. Ibid., p. 64.
108. Said, *Hattā Yughayyirū*, p. 21.
109. Bennabi, *Fikrat al-Ifriqiyyah al-Asyawiyyah*, p. 206, 261–173.
110. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 52.
111. Fuchs, *Metatheory and the Sociology of Sociology*, p. 531.
112. Gordon, *The History and Philosophy of Social Science*, p. 2; Allen, *Socio-cultural Dynamics*, pp. 19–20.
113. Bergesen, 'Let's Be Frank About World History', p. 195.
114. Turner, et al, *The Emergence of Sociological Theory*, p. 384.
115. Lachmann, *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Sociology*, p. 285.
116. Nolan & Lenski, *Human Societies*, p. 4.
117. Borgatta & Borgatta, *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, p. 1169.
118. Ibid.; Turner et al, *The Emergence of Sociological Theory*, p. 384; Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*; Nolan & Lenski, *Human Societies*, pp. 20–21.
119. Said, *Hattā Yughayyirū*, pp. 19–22.
120. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, pp. 42–43.
121. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 5.
122. Bennabi, *Bayna al-Rashād wa al-Tayb*, p. 35.
123. Elmesser, *Ishkālīyyat al-Tahayyuz: Ru'yah Ma'rifiyyah* (Bias: Epistemological Bias in the Physical and Social Sciences); Ahmed, *Towards An Islamic Anthropology*; al-Qurayshi, *Al-Taghyir al-Ijtima'i*.
124. Ibid., *Al-Taghyir al-Ijtima'i*; al-Milad, *Malik Bin Nabī wa Mushkilat al-Hadārah*.
125. Bennabi, *Bayna al-Rashād wa al-Tayb*, p. 37.
126. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. xviii.
127. Bennabi, *Al-Muslim fi 'Ālam al-Iqtisād*, p. 60.
128. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, pp. 47–48.
129. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, p. 45.
130. Barium, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. 113.
131. Bennabi, *Wijhat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, pp. 61–62.
132. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, pp. 15–16.

133. Ibid., p. 15.
134. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 6.
135. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 15.
136. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 13.
137. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 16.
138. Turner, et al, *The Emergence of Sociological Theory*, p. 28.
139. Allen, *Socio-cultural Dynamics*, pp. 139–142.
140. Gordon, *The History and Philosophy of Social Science*, pp. 454–455.
141. Durkheim, quoted in Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, p. 82.
142. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 53, 64.
143. Sanderson, 'Civilizational Approaches to World-Historical Change', p. 17.
144. Sorokin, *Society, Culture, and Personality*, p. 637.
145. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, p. vii.
146. Sanderson, 'Civilizational Approaches to World-Historical Change', p. 18.
147. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, pp. 20–39.
148. Ibid.; Sanderson, 'Civilizational Approaches to World-Historical Change', p. 18.
149. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, p. 644.
150. Ibid., p. 645; Said, *Hattā Yughayyirū*, p. 21 from Bennabi's introduction.
151. Bennabi, *Qadāya Kubra*, p. 7; *Wijhat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, p. 25.
152. In terms of Kuhn's idea of paradigm shift in Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.
153. Kung, et al, *Paradigm Change in Theology*.

## CHAPTER 7

1. Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, p. 21.
2. Ubadah, *Safahāt Mushriqah*, p. 75.
3. Said, *La Ikrahā fi al-Dīn; Dirāsāt wa Abhāth fi al-Fikr al-Islāmī*; Zoubir, 'State, Civil Society, and the Question of Radical Fundamentalism'; al-Hassani, *Malek Bennabi*.
4. Kepel, *Allah in the West*; Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*; Ubadah, *Safahāt Mushriqah*; Barghuth, *Mawqī' al-Mas'alah al-Thaqāfiyyah*.
5. Bennabi completed a first draft of his study on *The Qur'anic Phenomenon* in the early years of the Second World War. As he was involved in anti-colonial activities and expressed views in favor of the Axis, as opposed to the Allies that included France, he suspected that French authorities were monitoring his activities. For this reason he entrusted the manuscript to his French mother-in-law who hid it in a hole in the basement. Bennabi was arrested in early 1943. Meanwhile, the French police cracked down on suspected activists, French as well as non-

- French. His mother-in-law was so scared she set fire to the manuscript. When he was released after nearly two years of detention, Bennabi received the news of the destruction of his work, but instead of surrendering he confined himself for a number of weeks and reconstructed the work in the form in which it was first published in 1947 in Algiers. For further information, see the translator's notes in Bennabi's *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, pp. 17-18.
6. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. ix.
  7. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 19.
  8. Qur'an, 13:11.
  9. Bennabi, *Wijhat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, p. 52.
  10. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, pp. 19-27; *Islam in History and Society*, pp. 6-11.
  11. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 76.
  12. Ibid., pp. 128-129.
  13. Ibid., p. 75.
  14. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 109.
  15. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 65.
  16. Ibid., p. 66.
  17. Ibid., p. 51.
  18. Qur'an, 13:11.
  19. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 49.
  20. Ibid., p. 52.
  21. Ibid., p. 49.
  22. Ibid., *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, pp. 1-3.
  23. Saïd, *La Ikraha fi al-Dīn*, p. 67.
  24. Qur'an, 3: 140.
  25. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 6.
  26. Bennabi, *Wijhat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, p. 25.
  27. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, pp. 48-49.
  28. Ibid., p. 49.
  29. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*; Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*.
  30. Qur'an, 13:11.
  31. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 25.
  32. Merrad, *Al-Islām al-Mu'āṣir*; Jadan, 'Usus al-Taḳaddum', p. 416; Imarah, *al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah*; Masqawi, *Nazarāt fi al-Fikr al-Islāmī wa Malik Bin Nabī*, pp. 47-48.
  33. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, p. 109.
  34. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, *Kitāb al-Taḥḥid*, p. 12, 16, 40; *Kashf al-Shubuhāt*, pp. 13-16.
  35. Ibid.
  36. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 24; Marzuqi, *Dirāsāt Naqdiyyah fi al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, p. 34.
  37. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, *Kitāb al-Taḥḥid*, p. 12, 16, 40; *Kashf al-Shubuhāt*, pp. 13-16.
  38. Ijtihad means creative critical reasoning concerning religious issues according to the sublime principles of Islam.
  39. Imarah, *Al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah*, p. 174.

40. Iqbal, *Tajdid al-Tafkīr al-Dīnī fi al-Islām*, p. 175.
41. al-'Afghani, *Al-'Urwah al-Wuthqā*, p. 74.
42. Imarah, *Al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah*, pp. 161-167.
43. Abdu, *al-'Māl al-Kāmilah*, p. 20, 330-343.
44. Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*, p. 72.
45. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 150.
46. Ibid., p. 130.
47. Atatürkism is a term derived from Atatürk, the name given to Mustafa Kemal, founder of the Modern Secular Republic of Turkey which was the center of the Ottoman caliphate for more than five centuries. After his death, his ideas became an ideology of extremist secularism which not only separates but subordinates religion and state.
48. Bennabi, *Wijhat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, pp. 53-57; *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 41.
49. Bennabi, *Wijhat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī*, p. 54; *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, pp. 29-30.
50. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*.
51. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 29.
52. Ibid., p. 20, 30, 55.
53. Ibid.
54. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 24.
55. Ibid.; Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 85.
56. Jadan, 'Usus al-Taḳaddum', p. 416.
57. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*.
58. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 75; *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 89.
59. Bennabi, *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, p. 29.
60. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, pp. 61-68.
61. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*.
62. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 74.
63. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*; *On the Origins of Human Society*.
64. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 19.
65. al-Qurayshi, *Al-Taḥyīr al-Ijtima'ī*; al-Milad, *Malik Bin Nabī wa Mushkilat al-Hadārah*; Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*; Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*.
66. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 67.
67. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, p. 2.
68. Gabriel, *Freud and Society*, p. 58.
69. Beg, *Perspectives of Civilization*, p. 77, 81, 84.
70. Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p. 792; Bert, 'Freud and Lyotard on Civilization', p. 126.
71. Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p. 787.
72. Ibid., p. 767.
73. Friedlander, *History and Psychoanalysis*, p. 29.
74. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 67.



75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, pp. 60–61.
78. Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p. 793; Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 11.
79. Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p. 767.
80. Freud, 'The Future of an Illusion'. Quoted in Beg, *Perspectives of Civilization*, p. 83.
81. Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p. 800.
82. Ibid.
83. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 71; *Wijhat al-Ālam al-Islāmī*, p. 52.
84. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 54; Talbi, 'The Implication of Malek Bennabi's View', p. 13.
85. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*; *Wijhat al-Ālam al-Islāmī*, p. 154; Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', p. 800.
86. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, p. 39.
87. Jung, *Psychological Types*, p. 442.
88. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 25.
89. Clarke, *In Search of Jung*, p. 117.
90. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, pp. 43–44; Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, pp. 128–129.
91. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 39.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., p. 44.
94. Ibid., pp. 13–15.
95. Ibid., p. 16.
96. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. 122.
97. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, pp. 11–17.
98. Bruno, *Dictionary of Key Words in Psychology*, p. 43.
99. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 19.
100. Ibid., pp. 19–20.
101. Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 14; *On the Origins of Human Society*, pp. 44–45.
102. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 11.
103. Wadsworth, *Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development*, p. 26.
104. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 22.
105. Ginsburg and Opper, *Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development*, p. 26.
106. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, pp. 22–23.
107. Ibid., pp. 60–61.
108. Wadsworth, *Piaget's Theory*, p. 26; Ginsburg, *Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development*, p. 26.
109. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 23.
110. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 33.
111. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 19.

112. Ibid., p. 31, 39–44.
113. Bennabi, *Mudhakkirat*, p. 236.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid., p. 234, 252; Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. 82.
116. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*; *The Problem of Ideas*; *On the Origins of Human Society*; *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*.
117. Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas*, pp. 3–10.
118. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, p. 45.
119. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 78.
120. A collective term for the distinguished editors (Diderot, and d'Alambert) and contributors (Voltaire, Montesquieu, Helvetius and Rousseau) to the *Encyclopedie*, a major work of social and political reference published in France (1751–72) and associated with the French Enlightenment. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, p. 73.
121. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 63; *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 72.
122. Bennabi, *Qadāyā Kubrā*, p. 181.
123. Bennabi, Ibid., p. 184; *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 29.
124. Bennabi, *Qadāyā Kubrā*, p. 185.
125. Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, p. 40.
126. Bennabi, *Qadāyā Kubrā*, p. 185.
127. Scharff, *Comte After Positivism*, p. 39.
128. Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*, p. 71.
129. Craig, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p. 6.
130. Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, p. 72.
131. Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*, p. 71.
132. Ibid., *The Problem of Ideas*, p. 3, 10, 47; Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, pp. 99–106.
133. Ibid., *The Problem of Ideas*, pp. 3–5; Bennabi, *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, pp. 29–41.
134. Bennabi, *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, pp. 28–41.
135. Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents', pp. 800–801.
136. Bennabi, *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, pp. 28–46.
137. Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍah*, p. 14; Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama'*, p. 73.
138. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*; Moussalli, 'Introduction to Islamic Fundamentalism'; Zoubir, 'State, Civil Society and the Question of Radical Fundamentalism in Algeria.'
139. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. 163.
140. Bennabi, *Qadāyā Kubrā*, pp. 61–62.
141. Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, pp. 85–118.
142. Bennabi, *Fikrat Commonwealth Islāmī*, p. 25.
143. al-Qurayshi, *Al-Taghyir al-Ijtima'i*, p. 58.
144. Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*, p. 100; Said, *Hatta Yughayyira*, p. 10.

145. Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, pp. 49–61.

146. Said, *Hattā Yughayyirū*.

147. al-Qurayshī, *Al-Taghyr al-Ijtīmāʿī*, pp. 9–10, 294, 316; al-Milad, *Mālik Bin Nabī wa Mushkilāt al-Ḥadārah*, pp. 109–11; Bennabi, *Fi Mahab al-Ma'rakah*, pp. 35–37.

## CHAPTER 8

1. Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, pp. 32–34.
2. Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, p. 58.

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Since the publication of Samuel Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations" concern about civilization has been reintroduced into the debate on the world order. Malek Bennabi (1905-1973), prominent Algerian thinker and great Muslim intellectual, intently focused on unravelling the causes of Muslim decline and the success of Western civilization and culture. The key problem he theorized lay not in the Qur'an or Islamic faith but in Muslims themselves. The author investigates Bennabi's approach to civilization and the fundamental principles drawn, using metatheorizing methodology. In doing so he sheds further light on perhaps one of the more intriguing elements of Bennabi's theory, that civilization is governed by internal-external and social-intellectual factors and that an equation can be generated for civilization itself. This equation of Man+Soil+Time = Civilization and of which religion, according to Bennabi, forms the all-important catalyst, is explained and its significance in terms of the reversal of Muslim decline evaluated. What is clearly apparent is that for Bennabi, Man is the central force in any civilizing process and without him the other two elements are of no value.

With regard to outcomes, Bennabi's unerring conviction that unless Muslims changed their spiritual condition they could not effect any far-reaching, meaningful change in society is echoed in the Qur'anic verse: "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (13:11).

**Badrane Benlahcene** is Associate Professor of civilization studies and philosophy of history, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic and Social Sciences and Humanities, Batna University, Algeria. He is an expert on the work of Bennabi having published articles in a number of journals and presented papers on Bennabi and civilization studies at conferences in Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.  
website: <http://drbadrane.com>